

Review: "Impulse"

By Mark Bell / FILM THREAT / November 27, 2011

As far as short films go, *Impulse* lives in that upper echelon realm of films with a gorgeous look, sweet sound and slick editing. When you step back after watching it, with so much end of the world horror hinted at, and the tone so macabre, you truly get swept up.

The short reminded me initially of Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* remake, specifically the moments in that film where we're first introduced to a world gone mad where every aspect of "normalcy" is suddenly sinister and violent. While *Impulse* isn't as overt as a zombie assault, it really nails that same unease. Sure, folks may look benign and normal, but behind every sullen face could be a murderous sociopath.

While the film sets up that the world is ending, I'm also a bit dubious about that aspect as well, because hints begin to drop here and there that, perhaps, this problem may actually be more contained than it initially seems. There's a quarantine feel going, and suggestions for survivors to all group together in one location had cynical me thinking "easier target to eliminate" than "easier group to save."

All that in 20 minutes, and I haven't even mentioned the musician character, played by Chris Masterson, who winds up being our predominantly silent guide through these end times. He apparently needs to be somewhere, and he needs to be there with his guitar, and the short follows him as the environment surrounding consistently trips up what should be an otherwise simple journey. While sometimes having a recognizable face in a short film can be a bit of a red flag (you'd be surprised how many shorts gets programmed at festivals, regardless of quality, based on the fact that a celebrity had something to do with it; perhaps you wouldn't be *that* surprised), I'm happy to say that such a consideration is not a concern here.

Again, *Impulse* is a polished bit of filmmaking that hits its "instability at world's end" vibe perfectly. *Impulse* raises many questions that it leaves unanswered, and I wish that there was more to it since I enjoyed the experience so much.

Four stars.

Bettendorf duo's short gains wide acclaim

By Jonathan Turner / MOLINE DISPATCH & ROCK ISLAND ARGUS / November 11, 2011

What would you do if you had only 30 minutes left on Earth? The lead character faces that dilemma in a new 20-minute film made by two Bettendorf natives.

"Impulse," written and directed by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods of Bluebox Limited Films, is a short film about the end of the world, starring Chris Masterson from Fox's hit TV show "Malcolm in the Middle." The two 2003 Bettendorf High grads have already produced five feature-length films and 14 shorts.

"Impulse" was co-produced with frequent collaborator Christy Sullivan and executive Darren Brandl, with post-production completed at top entertainment houses such as The Village Recorder ("WALL·E," "Walk the Line"), Company 3 ("Transformers 2," "Star Trek"), and George Lucas' Skywalker Sound ("Avatar," "Toy Story 3").

"It was derived from an idea we had for a feature film, but works best in a short," said Mr. Beck, 27, who's now based in Los Angeles. "It's a man on his last day on Earth, who races through town to one last, final act. It's really skim on dialogue. A lot of that is, it's a suspense-oriented piece, an action-oriented piece. ... Bryan and I, as directors, we love films that are very visual."

The film's title comes from the impulsive decisions made in the story, he said.

For most of its projects, Bluebox attempts to film in Iowa. "Impulse" was shot in the Des Moines area, and many locals were used in the cast, including retired St. Ambrose theater professor Michael Kennedy and KWQC-TV anchorman Gary Metivier, Mr. Beck said.

Mixing the sound at the famed Skywalker Ranch in California evolved from a relationship that began in the Quad-Cities. Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods worked on the film "Iowa Boys" with sound designer Mac Smith, who started working at Skywalker 10 years ago, Mr. Beck said. "We kept in touch, and he always said, if we have right project, consider bringing it to Skywalker."

"Impulse" debuted at the 2010 LA Shorts Fest -- the world's leading short-film festival -- before a panel of judges headed by producer Paula Wagner ("War of the Worlds," "Mission: Impossible III"). The film was invited to the Sofia Independent Film Festival in Bulgaria, where it played alongside an exclusive selection of films including the Coen Brothers' "A Serious Man" and the Oscar-winning films "The New Tenants" and "The Hurt Locker."

Shorts International acquired worldwide distribution rights and released the film on iTunes in 14 territories, including North America, Japan, France, Germany and the UK, downloadable for \$1.99. "Impulse" also is available on video-on-demand and ShortsHD, a channel recently launched to 40 million homes worldwide on DirecTV, as well as on Dish Network and AT&T U-verse.

Bluebox's previous credits include "The Bride Wore Blood" (2006), "Her Summer" (2004), and "University Heights" (2004), which won them first prize in the MTV-U Best Film on Campus contest.

Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods currently are writing and directing a scripted pilot for MTV, which came about after the prize they won for the college film. That led to a development deal for a feature film, but that MTV Films division later folded, and now they're developing the TV pilot, which could be picked up as a series (online or broadcast) or TV movie, Mr. Beck said.

The only details he could tell about it were that it's a thriller that was shot in Iowa City this past March. He's not sure when it will air.

More information about "Impulse" and Bluebox can be found at www.blueboxlimited.com/impulse.

Movie filmed in Perry in 2009 makes its debut

By Laura Pieper / THE PERRY CHIEF / November 11, 2011

It's the end of the world.

Fighter jets streak overhead as a lone man runs down a deserted Second Street in Perry. An explosion rocks the downtown area behind him. He barely dodges a speeding ambulance on his dogged trek to an unknown destination.

The image is from a short movie shot in Perry two years ago this month and starring Chris Masterson, best-known as Francis, the oldest brother from "Malcolm in the Middle." "Impulse" was released on iTunes in October and begins with a grim premise.

"It poses the question, what would you do during your last 30 minutes on earth?" said Scott Beck, a Quad Cities native and co-director and writer of "Impulse."

The main character, played by Masterson, is driven by an unseen impulse to go somewhere during his last 30 minutes on earth. Along the way, he encounters the fears and frustrations of those who don't know how to handle the knowledge, as well as the compassion and peace offered by others as the apocalypse approaches.

"It turns dark in some places but I feel, ultimately, it's an uplifting story in a strange way," Beck said.

The entire film was shot in Perry in November 2009 (except for one scene that was shot near Adel). Production was in town for several weeks, but actual filming took place during a six-day period.

Beck said Perry was the perfect fit for their movie. They needed to be located near the Des Moines Airport to shuttle people and materials in from Los Angeles. They also needed a town with a great hotel and they found one in the Hotel Pattee.

"Once we found that I said there's no way we're doing it anywhere else," Beck said.

The way the city looked and was laid out worked perfectly for their plans, he added. Perry also boasted a "peaceful, pastoral setting" that they wanted to evoke in the movie.

Beck had nothing but praise for Perry and its people after his experience making "Impulse."

"The film could not have been made without the collaboration from Perry," he said.

The Perry Police Department, Fire Department and City officials were invaluable in procuring

set locations and blocking off areas of town during the filming. At one point, the movie shut down a six-block radius of downtown Perry.

Heartland Church of Christ, McKee Auto, Re-Max Pros on Main and Bredeaux Pizza all played important roles both onscreen and behind the scenes of “Impulse.”

Beck said the late Moe Michaelsen, who served on the Perry City Council at the time, was instrumental in helping the production crew find places to shoot. He also helped out when the production crew had an emergency the day before filming began and needed a place to store equipment. Michaelsen offered to let them use a garage he owned downtown for free.

“He was like a saving grace to us at that point,” Beck said. “That was the spirit of Perry we witnessed and really fell in love with when we were there.”

The film is dedicated to Michaelsen, who died in March 2010.

Beck and his co-director/writer, Bryan Woods, run Bluebox Limited Films out of the Quad Cities and Los Angeles. They have been making films together since they met in sixth grade, when they each discovered the other’s love of making short movies with their action figures. They attended the University of Iowa and decided to stay in-state to complete their education rather than transfer to a more prominent film school.

“I thought there was so much opportunity to do a film in Iowa, so I decided to stay,” Beck said.

The two have paired up on five feature films and 14 short films. “Impulse” is the largest-scale production they have worked on so far. Most of the cast (excluding Masterson) and crew for “Impulse” were from the Des Moines area.

“We love keeping the cast and crew local,” Beck said.

“Impulse” premiered on iTunes and can also be viewed on DirectTV, Dish Network and AT&T U-Verse.

Beck said they hope to have a screening of the movie in Perry at some point in the future. They may even return to Perry someday to make another movie.

“We would definitely come back,” he said. “We were blown away by the help from the community.”

The official website for “Impulse” is www.blueboxlimited.com/impulse. You can download “Impulse” at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/movie/impulse/id471759954>.

Home, at the End of the World: Bluebox Limited's "Impulse," Now Available on iTunes

By Mike Schulz / RIVER CITIES' READER / November 2, 2011

A young man sits in his living room, in a large, inviting house that, as we'll learn, is located in the small town of Perry, Iowa. He practices a quiet melody on his guitar, occasionally glancing at his handwritten sheet music for a song titled "Last Looks." It's a sunny day in late afternoon, and both the man and his surroundings exude an air of utter, unalterable calm, a feeling only briefly disrupted by the sound of a plane passing overhead. Well, that and the faraway screaming.

So begins *Impulse*, the latest offering by filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods of the Bettendorf-based (and, now, also Los Angeles-based) production company Bluebox Limited. And over the span of a compact 16-and-a-half minutes, Beck and Woods – both of whom are in their mid-20s – again demonstrate the rather intimidating gifts for screen composition and cinematic nuance that have made the duo's previous works, particularly their 2006 neo-Western *The Bride Wore Blood*, such impressive achievements. *Impulse* may be short, but as an example of engaging, evocative, and ultimately haunting storytelling, it's very, *very* sweet.

It's also, barring the music and designer Mac Smith's sound effects, very, very *quiet*. I might have already written more words for this article that you'd find in the entirety of *Impulse*'s scripted dialogue. (Beck and Woods share credit as the film's writers, directors, and producers.) As we all know, though, a picture is worth a thousand words, and some of the sequences pictured here by Beck and Woods are worth a lot more than that; the moviemakers smartly understand the economy – and, for audiences, the intense thrill – of letting visual and aural clues drive their narrative. Until the film's final image, we're never entirely certain about where *Impulse*'s threat is coming from. But it doesn't take much more than the sight of a kid spray-painting "To Hell and Back" on a church exterior, or the sounds of unseen helicopters zipping over a deserted Main Street, to glean that something very bad is happening in Perry, and quite possibly the *world*, and that the situation is quickly getting worse.

To be sure, this is readily apparent to our guitar-playing protagonist David (played with ease and confidence by former *Malcolm in the Middle* co-star Christopher Masterson), who spends the film making desperate attempts to escape the town. We're told neither what he's escaping from nor to *where*, but Beck and Woods, from the start, pepper David's predicament with suggestive, insidious hints: warning sirens blaring on a cloudless day; a collection of lit candles arranged in the shape of a cross; a well-dressed businessman (James Serpento) apologetically hijacking David's car and muttering, "We're all fucked anyway, right?"; a shotgun-wielding grandfather (Michael Kennedy) taking deliberate aim at a skateboard-riding relative. Propelled by Corey Wallace's insistent, nerve-racking score, Beck's and Woods' early scenes of small-town panic all but vibrate with tension and foreboding, and those sensations are intensified by our continued haziness about what, exactly, the *source* of the danger is. Terrorists? Disease? Zombies? (In an

enjoyable newscast cameo, KWQC-TV6's Gary Metivier tells viewers that their one hope for surviving the threat is to "get to the quarry.") It's the end of the world as we know it in *Impulse*, and based on the on-screen evidence, *no one* feels fine.

Yet gradually, almost without your being aware of it, the mood of the film subtly shifts, and what began as a paranoid, end-of-days freak-out *à la* Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* morphs into a hushed, somewhat elegiacal plea for the comforts of simplicity and normalcy – for peace. Through much of *Impulse*, David's fanatical insistence on bringing a guitar, *any* guitar, along on his trek seems vaguely comedic, a symbolic representation of the scruffily bearded, chapeau-wearing young man's hipster cred. (Although, as a prop, the musical instrument is at least well-used in one brilliantly, hilariously conceived shocker involving a speeding ambulance.) By the time Beck and Woods get to their climactic scene, however, you realize that the whole movie, in its way, has actually been *about* the guitar – or at least about the collective need, the *impulse*, behind why we make music in the first place. Without at all skimping on the pleasures of a tightly constructed short thriller (and Andrew M. Davis' photography and Russell Andrew's editing are particularly fine), the Bluebox filmmakers, here, have crafted an entertainment of surprising elegance and profundity. The film asks, "What do you want to take from this life? And where do you want to be when it ends?" I'm not sure I'm ready to answer that first question, but if life ends while watching a work as sharply rendered and inspiring as *Impulse*, that might be all right with me.

Keep 'em coming - more movies at the 2010 Wild Rose Film Festival

By James Serpento / EXAMINER.COM / November 7, 2010

What follow are reviews of films presented during both the Saturday, November 6 and Sunday, November 7 sessions of the 8th Annual 2010 Wild Rose Independent Film Festival, continuing through November 11 at the Fleur Cinema and Cafe, 4545 Fleur Drive in Des Moines, IA. Check <http://www.ariesworks.com> for scheduling and other details, as the Fest moves into its final days, made up of the Iowa Film Showcase Series.

Impulse by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods. When I was a kid, I saw what looked like a plastic milk carton lying on the ground some distance away. I ran up and gave it a mighty kick.

It was, in fact, a salt block, left out for the deer to enjoy.

At the mere price of two broken toes, I had learned that danger is only one small miscalculation away, and that things that look light may be heavy indeed.

So it is with *Impulse*, a small film that is, one finds, weighty and powerful, with menace glimpsed at the corners of the frame – or simply heard in the distance. Beck and Woods have long been, in this reviewer's opinion, Iowa's best hope for a home-grown masterpiece (not precisely accurate, since they've relocated to LA – but they still express a wish to bring their projects back here.) Neither is yet thirty years old, and yet both possess a mastery of the medium from which a few veterans could learn a thing or two. *Impulse*, wrought with the extraordinary care for which these guys are swiftly becoming known far and wide, is another impressive addition to their canon, a body of work that reveals characters landing spare, glancing blows at each other as they stumble and tumble through a landscape turned mortally dangerous.

Still to come: The Awards Show, and more reviews of films in the Iowa Film Showcase Series.

In Their Own Words

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / December 27, 2009

Here's what some of those we selected as the top Quad-City arts, entertainment and culture stories of the oughts had to say about the past decade.

Figge

“Programming, which remains of the highest quality, flows through a singular, iconic structure that hugs and reflects the waters of the Mississippi. Any visitor passing through the heart of town, or looking across from the Illinois shores, will be galvanized by the Chipperfield-designed building. ... To our original 1925 donor, Charles Ficke, one might ask, ‘Do you recognize us now?’ ”

— Linda Lewis, docent and past president, Figge Art Museum

River Music Experience

“Over the years, we’ve been able to hone the focus of the RME’s mission. In a nutshell, that focus is about serving musicians and music appreciators in our community and beyond. I think we’ve done a pretty good job of accomplishing that, particularly as far as musicians are concerned.”

— Tom Swanson, general manager, River Music Experience

Adler Theatre

“Due to the stage expansion and backstage renovation, the theatre has added more popular, larger touring productions to its Broadway series lineup. Such blockbusters have included ‘Hairspray,’ ‘Chicago,’ ‘The Producers,’ ‘Mamma Mia’ and the upcoming May 2010 ‘Disney’s Beauty and the Beast.’ These first-rate productions have helped to increase the number of Broadway subscriptions while reaching new and younger audiences.

— Rick Palmer, executive director, RiverCenter/Adler Theatre

Bucktown Center for the Arts

“MidCoast (Fine Arts) was beginning to invest in a new project that would establish a new permanent urban home for regional artists to create, educate and sell on-site. ... Bucktown Center for the Arts’ grand opening was in July 2005.”

— Dean Schroeder, executive director, MidCoast

Filmmaking

“We celebrated Y2K in Los Angeles, wondering if our home computer would succumb to the Millennium Bug. As we struggled to complete a documentary shot on 16mm film, digital technology suddenly became affordable. We sold our film editor to the Grateful Dead on eBay and edited ‘Villisca: Living with a Mystery’ on a souped-up PC. That success led to ‘Lost Nation: The Ioway’ and our relocation to the Midwest. We will celebrate the end of the decade in digital production on ‘Country School: One Room — One Nation’ and ‘Movie Star: The Secret Lives of Jean Seberg.’ ”

— *Kelly and Tammy Rundle, FourthWallFilms.com*

“We’ve gone through a crash course of do-it-yourself filmmaking. We’ve produced numerous features and shorts, own and operate a production company, and have a studio deal in hand. ... The process has been fast, slow, wild, and boring ... so finally we know what real filmmaking is like.”

— *Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, Bluebox Limited*

Locals Make Good

“One day while surfing, I realized that I could spend the rest of my life in a perpetual race for the next destination, with an obsessive-self-destructive inability to enjoy life as it happens. I realized that day as I sat on my surfboard, watching the sun go down ... this is the Goal. The destination is the Journey. ... Happiness is the Journey. It’s about celebrating the smallest of achievements. Taking moments to allow yourself to be happy, taking stock in the details of life, the celebration of the human spirit.”

— *Eric Christian Olson, actor*

QC On Film: Rising Star

By Michael Thomas Masters / QC MAGAZINE / November 2009

Since 1990, more than a dozen feature films, along with numerous made for TV films and student films, have been shot right here in the Quad Cities. Recognized film inventors, filmmakers and film businesses have called the Quad Cities home. In fact, many still do. With Hollywood connections, a history of invention and a picturesque setting, the Quad Cities has kept the cameras rolling.

A RICH HISTORY

Traveling back one hundred years to 1909, motion picture pioneer Alexander F. Victor displayed his new moving pictures projection model to the directors of the White Lily Company at their home offices in Davenport, Iowa. At the White Lily factory, production operations of Victor's Viopticon—the first portable stereopticon—began in February of 1910. The product was eventually introduced to the public in 1912.

Among Victor's inventions produced in the Quad Cities was a continuous-reduction printer that produced 28mm prints from the movie industry's standard 35mm film. By the early 1920s, the Davenport Democrat newspaper featured impressive ads for the Victor Cine-Camera and Victor Cine-Projector. Public and industry response was instantaneously positive, with most dealers offering satisfaction or "money-back" guarantees on the new film inventions. Alexander F. Victor's movie equipment inventions began a long and productive association between the Quad Cities and the motion picture industry and placed Davenport on the filmmaker's map.

CONTINUED SUCCESS

As the film industry grew and flourished, so did the Quad Cities' involvement in film, primarily on the promotion, film distribution and sales sides of the business. Originally founded in 1927 in Galesburg, Ill., by Kent D. Eastin, Eastin Pictures produced movie ads and newsreels for merchants and local news events. Eastin renamed his company "Blackhawk Films" and relocated to Davenport in 1934. From the 1950s through to the late 1980s, classic motion pictures were available for sale or rent on 16mm, 8mm

During its heyday in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, Blackhawk Films boasted up to 18 new releases every month, an in-house professional film restoration facility and more than 90 employees working in a picturesque building in downtown Davenport.

Collectors were thrilled (including this writer, who became a collector while in high school) at the chance to browse through Blackhawk Films' extensive catalogs, which offered vintage one- or two-reel short subjects among hundreds of stars, including Laurel and Hardy, Charles Chaplin and Our Gang, as well as feature-length films (mostly silent classics) featuring Lon Chaney, Buster Keaton and the Gish Sisters, Lillian and Dorothy.

Due to the growing popularity of VHS video sales nationwide, the Blackhawk Films sales office in Davenport closed in 1987, after enjoying a long and successful history in the Quad Cities.

ITALIAN INFLUENCE

Beginning in the early 1990s, Pupi and Antonio Avati, brothers and Italian filmmakers with over 40 films to their credits, chose to shoot four feature-length films in the Quad Cities. Their first QC location production shoot was the internationally distributed and acclaimed biopic, “Bix” (1991), which centers on the short life and times of renowned Davenport native and 1920s jazz trumpet icon, Bix Beiderbecke. “Bix” played, and was well received, at the Cannes Film Festival in France. It was during the filming of “Bix” that the Avati brothers fell in love with the Quad Cities, stating, “It’s the real America. The America of filmmaker Frank Capra.”

Pupi and Antonio Avati felt that the friendly and accepting people, as well as the farmlands and picturesque landscape of the Quad Cities, reminded them of Bologna, their hometown in northern Italy.

The Avati brothers returned to shoot three additional feature films in the Quad Cities after completing “Bix,” including a romantic Brooke Shields film, “An American Love.” Quad Cities’ locations utilized in this film include a boat ride on the Mississippi (crossing the Centennial Bridge), an outdoor party at a Gold Coast home, a shopping expedition at SouthPark Mall and a visit to the Buffalo Bill Museum. The U.S. film premiere for “An American Love” was held in Davenport at St. Ambrose University in August of 1993.

“Hideout,” a 2007 mystery-thriller focusing on an Italian woman who moves to Davenport to open a restaurant, is the Avati brothers’ latest film to date shot on location in the Quad Cities.

A LITTLE SUGAR

In 2007, directors Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck (“Half Nelson,” 2006) shot their 2009 baseball drama, “Sugar,” on location throughout the Quad Cities. The primary baseball field location used in the film was John O’Donnell Stadium, now Modern Woodman Park. The Quad Cities provided a memorable location for the film, with the Centennial Bridge fantastic to behold on the big screen.

“Sugar” follows the perseverance and journey of a talented young baseball player from the Dominican Republic, portrayed by Algenis Perez Soto, as he breaks into the American big league to earn the money needed to support his impoverished family.

The filming of “Sugar” generated nearly a million dollars in business revenue for the Quad Cities. The film successfully competed at the Sundance and Toronto Film Festivals. “Sugar” enjoyed a well-attended opening and reception in the Quad Cities in late April 2009.

“Since the Iowa Film and Television Tax Credit Incentives Program started in 2007, the state has seen a tremendous influx of interest in bringing productions to Iowa, with the tax credit incentives thus far exceeding 35 million dollars as of June 30, 2009 and triggering 70 million dollars of production during that period,” says Doug Miller, another important Quad City film figure. Miller was born, raised and educated in the Quad Cities and is a long-time, vital part of the QC film scene. Among his many accomplishments and roles, he was the field producer on “Sugar” (2009) and production director on “Bix” (1991).

Though the tax incentives came to a halt in September and the program is under investigation, the program, while functioning, spurred interest and added to the already rich history of Quad Cities' film.

Miller serves on the Quad City Film Coalition, which is an affiliate of Quad Cities First (formerly the Quad City Development Group). Together these two groups continue to be instrumental in promoting the Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois regions for film and television production. As a result, the Quad Cities boast admirable and creative accomplishments and connections in both the film production and film business sectors.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

The Quad Cities has also produced its share of talented and award-winning filmmakers. Among the most promising and creative contemporary filmmakers to hail from the QCA in recent years are two University of Iowa graduates, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, both from Bettendorf, Iowa. Beck and Woods have been writing, directing and producing feature-length and short-subject films since 1996, including "Remembering November" (2002), "University Heights" (2004) and "The Bride Wore Blood: A Contemporary Western" (2006). Each of these was filmed either partially or totally in the Quad Cities.

Still in their mid-twenties, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods are the founders of Bluebox Limited Films, a Quad Cities and Los Angeles production company, which develops new material for films. It is not uncommon for the two busy filmmakers to have several film projects in development at a given time.

Scott Beck, presently living and working on film projects in Los Angeles, and Bryan Woods, living and working in the Quad Cities, recently commented, "There's magic in the landscape of the Quad Cities. The incredible Mississippi, the green and rolling fields and the colorful seasons make it a great and special place to live and to film."

"We're filmmakers," they state on their website, "and our goal is to continue making films in Iowa on a larger scale."

Founded in 2006, Crazy Eyes Productions is a Quad City based film and video production company located at the NewVentures Center in downtown Davenport. "We're now downtown in the swing of things and the NewVentures Center provides excellent opportunities for growth and development," said 25-year-old owner, Justin Anderson.

A graphic designer, Anderson loved operating film cameras as a kid and designed his first website, a comedy premise, at age 15. For the Rock Island Arsenal, Crazy Eyes Productions recently produced a series of creative animated ammunitions safety spots to be shown overseas to the U.S. troops. The company's current film work was also showcased when it designed the title graphics for the "History Hacker" series featured on The History Channel. Crazy Eyes Productions also participated in DavenportOne's Campaign kick-off and presented their "movie spoof" videos, which were a great success.

With a strong belief in the Quad City's creative film community, Justin Anderson is enthusiastic and hopeful for the continuing success of filmmaking in the Quad Cities. He is also passionate and optimistic about the future role of his company in continuing to inspire and assist creative visual artists in the Quad Cities area to produce original and significant community, corporate, commercial and theatrical film and video productions.

With a rich history of memorable film inventions, businesses and special events, and a healthy crop of recent films and talented filmmakers associated with the Quad Cities, it's clear that the Quad Cities' film story is far from over.

Review: "The Bride Wore Blood"

By Matthew Sorrento / FILM THREAT / March 31, 2008

"The Bride Wore Blood" has some tricks up its sleeve. They aren't revealed until near the end, proving that this hour-long film (more than a short, but not quite a feature) is like an aspiring writer's attempt at "The Usual Suspects." But before the plot turns into a puzzle (and a bit puzzling), one twist appears right away: subtitled "A Contemporary Western," this film is really a moody thriller motivated by a revenger.

A gunslinging bounty hunter (Travis Shepherd) is charged to protect a character named "the Bride" (Christy Sullivan); when he finds her murdered, he's bent on vengeance. He is motivated by the memory of his mother's death, which would be better suited for backstory than as an awkward flashback in the film. When he reaches his targets, a mystery begins to unravel, and the script unveils its contrivances, which are more clever than satisfying.

Yet writer/directors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods are comfortable putting their story onscreen. The visual composition, which makes good use of foreground and background, is formally tight and telling, even if many shots linger and abuse the zoom lens. Thus some visuals are over-stylized, like when a buff target of the bounty hunter awaits around a corner as if he were posing for a fashion shoot. But overall, the direction lets the film's somber mood flourish and allows the hired gun to develop into a languishing, tortured soul instead of a device of the deliberate script. The visual skill of Beck and Woods is likely what caught the attention of voters for MTV's "Best Film on Campus" competition, which awarded the two with a plasma TV that, in guerrilla filmmaking spirit, they hocked to finance this film.

It's a shame that the casting wasn't stronger, as the long-haired hired gun appears less like a "Man with No Name" than a death metal front man. When Shepherd howls "Liar!" at a shady policeman, we realize that such a role is not a stretch.

Three stars.

Review: "The Bride Wore Blood"

By John Oak Dalton / MICROCINEMASCENE.COM / November 7, 2007

Iowa directors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods have been doing interesting work in their young careers, with *The Bride Wore Blood* their most accomplished to date. This time out, Beck and Woods go for a more stylized vibe in this neo-spaghetti western outing, with a memorable genre-appropriate score and some unusual touches in character and production design.

But I believe their strengths remain the talented group of actors they surround themselves with -- from my perspective one of the strongest continuing ensembles in microcinema -- among them Travis Shepherd, Justin Marxen, Jim Siokos, Shane Simmons, and Sabien Minter.

These talents help the directors over a few rough spots on the production side; I felt the screenplay called for more dramatic tension in both shooting and editing, and a little tighter cutting and more dynamic framing would have helped an agreeably laconic script.

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods are both filmmakers to watch as they continue to add to their filmography.

Three stars.

Review: "The Bride Wore Blood"

By Pete Bauer / SURVIVING IN SAFETY HARBOR / October 7, 2007

The reimagination of the Western genre seems to be cropping up lately with the web series "The West Side" and Bluebox Limited's "The Bride Wore Blood". "Blood", co-written and co-directed by Bluebox's co-founders Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, follows the exploits of a modern day hired-gun- with-a-conscience, played effectively by Travis Shepherd.

Shepherd is hired to protect a man's soon-to-be bride when things go horribly wrong. Drawn to follow the facts of her death to its ultimate conclusion, Shepherd finds a weaving story of deceit and mistrust make up the driving forces behind his failure to protect the bride.

The film clocks in at 60 minutes and is segmented into four "acts" which twist the story from one unexpected path to the next. All of the cinematic elements are top notch, from the music to the cinematography, to the acting to the directing. The writing is crisp and the camera movements create a wonderful, consistent style of the piece.

After the letdown with "Her Summer", I am very excited to find "Blood" to be such an excellent piece of microcinema filmmaking.

On a side note, having immersed myself in the Bluebox world over the last week, I found myself feeling a strong sense of déjà vu. Years ago I bought and watched multiple episodes of the Random Foo/Pangaea low-budget public access series called "Fade to Black". Each episode in the series consisted of a number of short films from various genres.

The Foo/Pangaea group were one of the first real "players" in the microcinema world. Their output was tremendous, generating almost 100 short films in a 10 year period (96-05). While watching "Fade to Black" I saw the same small group of actors in the same locations being used for various projects.

Bluebox does so as well. Through these three films ("University Heights", "Her Summer" and "The Bride Wore Blood"), the cast has remained primarily constant. And the house location used in the opening of "Her Summer" is wonderfully used again in a suspenseful showdown between two guns-for-hire in "Blood". Kudos for finding and keeping the talented cast members involved in their projects. In microcinema, you use what you have access to and there's no shame in availing yourself to the same actors and locations.

I also appreciated Bluebox's understanding of film history, paying homage to both "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (the coursework assigned to the class is lifted line for line from Ark) in "University Heights" and "The Birds" (the car screaming across the horizon, dust and smoke billowing behind it, accentuating the urgency of the moment) in "The Bride Wore Blood".

I hope Beck and Woods continue to make movies. They're very talented guys. The Foo/Pangaea group has all but dissolved over the past three years. Jason Santo, of Pangaea, went on to create

Mindscape Pictures, but has since stopped making movies. He got married and opened up a comic book store. C.C. Chapman and Dan Gorgone, of Random Foo, haven't made a new film in three years... they have children now and their priorities have shifted.

My hope for Beck and Woods is that they are able to make a living in cinema before the responsibility of marriage and fatherhood enter their lives. These guys have real talent and I'd hate to see their work diminish like so many other previous microcinema filmmakers.

Review: "Her Summer"

By Pete Bauer / SURVIVING IN SAFETY HARBOR / October 6, 2007

The second film from Bluebox Limited, the group of young filmmakers (Scott Beck and Bryan Woods) that made the successful "University Heights", is called "Her Summer". The story involves two young friends who scour through a box of old police evidence, searching for clues of the unsolved murders of two people and the potential whereabouts of a missing police officer who discovered the bodies and was related to the victims.

The story behind the story is the police plot is based on actual events that occurred in Iowa and the script went through various incarnations trying to tell that story... first a heavy character drama, the second a silent ghost story film, the third a teen buddy film. In the end, "Her Summer" ends up trying to be two of those, but with very mixed results, with only one of them being successful.

Written and directed by Woods, the greatest challenge with "Her Summer" is that the filmmakers tried to force together two very different styles of storytelling, with very different intents, into one film.

First, the true life ghost story is told very well, with minimal dialogue, structured and planned out visuals as well as very creepy music. Interspersed between this unnerving tale of murder and mystery are two high school/college age kids who search through a box of police evidence about the crime, joking, talking about dates to dances and life in general. The dialogue is, at times, improvised, making it less tight and often meandering.

Splicing together a sharp, well thought out ghost story with exposition about teen angst between two guys in a basement makes for a inconsistent approach and ultimately leads to confusion. As the film opens, I am immediately brought into the mystery behind the murders and the torment the police officer goes through the night he discovers their bodies.

I am then thrust into a conversation about a guy hemming and hawing about calling a girl he likes and asking her to a dance. I'm then brought back to the crime scene and unexplained, ghostly events. Then back to a conversation about Mountain Dew and the appropriate use of the term Dewski.

You get the idea.

It is two different movies thrust into one and while the end of the film tries to effectively tie the two storylines together, it only does so with a modicum of success. I kept asking myself, "What does this movie want to be?"

The beauty of microcinema (i.e., very low budget filmmaking) is that you have the freedom to take chances and try things mainstream film studios wouldn't attempt. So, I appreciate the idea and the risks behind telling "Her Summer" this way, however I wish the filmmakers would have

either told a really good ghost story or made a film about the fleeting, yet memorable moments of youth... but not at the same time.

Review: "University Heights"

By Pete Bauer / SURVIVING IN SAFETY HARBOR / October 4, 2007

If I were born 20 years earlier, I'd be Scott Beck. Beck, the writer/director of the very successful microbudget film "University Heights" formed Bluebox Limited to produce and distribute his work along with fellow Iowan college buddy and film partner Bryan Woods.

I envy Beck's place in the cinematic time line. When I was his age, I was dying to make movies, but the technology was not there to make it available to the average person. So I had to wait. And while I waited for technology to catch up to my dreams, I got married, had kids and got a real job. All of these things are wonderful, but limit my ability to pursue my dreams because of the lack of free time. Appropriately, film making now comes in fourth, behind God, family and the job. So, I do what I can, when I can.

College student Beck, on the other hand, is blessed with immense talent and a DVX100 camera. He has made a ton of films and grew as a filmmaker with each project. The culmination of his efforts is a deep and multi-layered story in the feature "University Heights".

Heights is a character piece that brings numerous characters on a college campus together in interweaving and intertwining story lines that converge into a very satisfying climax.

The main characters include Grant, a semi-stoner college youth on the rebound and Katie, his new love interest who disapproves of his choices. There's Jake, a teacher teetering on severe depression who has struggled with relationships his whole life and now wonders about his own sexuality. There's Lou and his hapless buddy who warm their lives through hate and distrust. And there's Tom, a professor of ethics who's past life shows he did not live what he taught. The unexpected loss of his wife and a re-evaluation of his own life has straightened his path, but his past still haunts him.

This is the complexity of a story written by a 19-year old. If I was envious, I'd hate Beck, but he's too talented for that.

Heights is an impressive film made by an impressive team using all volunteers and a shoestring budget. The cast is very solid, especially considering its size. Beck is lucky to have access to so many resources with free time... thank you college! Use it before you lose it... it only gets harder from here.

I should also note that Beck and Woods were also finalist in the last Project Greenlight competition, ending up in the top 50 out of thousands of entries. These guys will make their mark in the industry, one way or another.

"University Heights" is a wonderful achievement for these young filmmakers. You can read more about this film and others, including the thriller "Her Summer" and the Neo-Western "The

Bride Wore Blood" at their Bluebox Limited website. Since I bought all three films, I look forward to seeing the next two and will let you know my thoughts here.

Keep an eye out for these guys... they'll end up with a movie showing at a theater near you before you know it.

Tax credit for movies has immediate effect

By Abby Simons / DES MOINES REGISTER / May 18, 2007

Only minutes after Gov. Chet Culver signed into law a bill that would provide tax incentives to movie producers who create their films in Iowa, the three young partners of an independent film company looked out over the Mississippi River and plotted a script to match their new movie setting.

"This is huge," said Scott Beck, 22, of Bettendorf, who with friends Travis Shepherd, 24, and Bryan Woods, 22, own and operate production company Bluebox Limited.

"We're filmmakers, and our goal is to continue making films in Iowa on a larger scale. We try to cut corners with as much money as possible, and this will encourage other filmmakers to stay in the state, and people in Hollywood will come here."

House File 892 offers 25 percent tax credits for local filmmaking expenses and overall investments for films shot in Iowa with budgets of more than \$100,000.

Supporters of the bill, including lawmakers, local film industry experts and economic development officials, say filmmaking could become a source of economic growth and jobs by attracting Hollywood producers who spend big bucks in Iowa communities when shooting within the state.

Culver signed the bill into law while kicking off a series of "Capitol for a Day" events that will bring state officials to communities around Iowa this summer. He toured Dubuque's recent economic development projects, also meeting residents and civic leaders.

He said filmmaking not only promotes the state but has lasting economic effects. "The impact of these movies has been felt long after the actors and directors have packed up their belongings and returned to Hollywood," Culver said.

Steve Schott, producer of "The Final Season," shot last year in eastern Iowa, illustrated that point. He said that during production, his crew racked up more than 3,000 hotel nights and hundreds of rental cars. That's not to mention the thousands of dollars spent in restaurants and local stores.

The incentives, which are offered by most of Iowa's neighbors, are also what attract investors when filming in a certain state, Schott said.

"I'd call them and tell them about my project. Their first question was always 'Do you have a tax incentive bill?' No. Click," he said.

Two potentially large-scale projects have awaited the governor's signature and will probably begin shooting this summer. Thriller "Curse" will be shot in Marshalltown, while "Sugar," the story of a Dominican baseball player, will begin production in Davenport.

The benefits aren't just for cities. Producers will be seeking Iowans to assist crews, said Kent Newman, a film writer, director and producer and president of the 100-member Iowa Motion Picture Association.

Tax incentives promise boost for Iowa film industry

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / May 18, 2007

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods had fourth-row seats Thursday to what could be a major advancement in their careers.

The Bettendorf filmmakers, through their company, Bluebox Limited, were among a crowd of about 100 looking on as Gov. Chet Culver sign a tax incentives plan for Iowa filmmakers into law.

“This is a huge leap for Iowa, and it’s so important to Bryan and I as we pursue this career,” Beck said.

The bill signed by Culver — in Dubuque for the first in a series of traveling “Capital For a Day” programs — would give filmmakers a 25 percent income tax credit, based on expenditures above \$100,000, for Iowa residents and Iowa companies. It also would let Iowa companies and the people they hire exclude the income from their state income taxes.

“This is pretty much what we asked for in the very beginning,” said Tom Wheeler, manager of the Iowa Film Office, a division of the Iowa Department of Economic Development.

Woods and Beck, who are graduating this spring from the University of Iowa, said the incentives allows filmmakers like themselves to stay in the state, rather than be lured to California.

“It’s a great thing for big movies, but it’s also a great thing for smaller films,” Woods said. “Our dream is to stay here and make films in Iowa, and that’s exactly what we need to happen.

“It means making bigger films in Iowa more of a reality.”

Culver cited movies such as “Field of Dreams” and “The Final Season,” which filmed in Cedar Rapids last year and is scheduled to be released this year, as “a product that promotes our state to people across the country and around the world.”

“The Final Season,” based on the state baseball championship won by Norway High School, spent \$1 million in production in the state, while its cast and crew spent an additional \$400,000 to \$600,000 in the community.

Culver said the incentives would bring an estimated \$200,000 to the state for this fiscal year; \$500,000 next year, and \$800,000 by 2010.

Mike Tramontina, director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development, said movie production brings excitement to Iowa communities.

“People want to come over, to see it and be a part of it,” he said. “You don’t want to underestimate the impact of that.”

In the Quad-Cities last summer, Italian brothers Pupi and Antonio Avati filmed their movie “The Hideout.” Doug Miller, Davenport-based production manager for the movie, said that film was in its final stages of post-production for the English-language version.

Miller delivered a letter of thanks from the Avatis and a company ballcap to Culver.

“It makes it a lot easier” for the Avatis to produce movies with the incentives, Miller said. “They both are very interested in production in the Quad-Cities. They like the community tremendously.”

Another movie, of the scale of “The Hideout,” will be produced in the Quad-Cities late this summer, Miller said. Details about the production will likely be available in a few weeks, he said.

Scott Tunncliff, executive director of the Bettendorf Chamber of Commerce, said the incentives will have a ripple effect on other businesses, from caterers to hardware stores.

“It’s going to be bigger than most people in the area realize, when you factor in the businesses who will benefit from movies here,” Tunncliff said. “It’s all about being able to carry Iowa forward as a production center for all kinds of movies.”

Wheeler said neighboring states have film incentive packages that are drawing more movies to Minnesota and Illinois, and Wisconsin has a similarly attractive package that will be in effect in January. But none of them offer the income tax credit that Iowa is providing.

“Our program will match Wisconsin’s, plus we’ll have a little bit more. And our ‘little bit more’ is offering our service providers the opportunity to waive what they’ve earned on their state income taxes. That allows them to lower their rates up front, and give them a greater negotiating leverage,” Wheeler said.

The state, however, wants more collaboration than competition with its neighbors.

“We want to keep up with them, and we really want to collaborate with neighboring states, and pool our resources,” he said.

Wheeler said the first indications of the incentives would be seen by July 1.

“This is history in the making,” he said.

Top picks among Iowa films

By Michael Morain / DES MOINES REGISTER / May 3, 2007

First, the nitty-grits from today's Datebook:

The Iowa Motion Picture Association doles out its annual awards at an Oscars-style event at 7 p.m. Saturday at downtown's Savery Hotel, 401 Locust St. A screening of the best student and professional entries is scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, and filmmaking, writing and acting workshops are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. Each of the four workshops cost \$11, or \$35 for the whole day. (IMPA members pay \$8 each, or \$25 for the group.) Tickets to the reception at 6 p.m. cost \$35 (\$25 for members).

When I asked organizers to pick a few favorites from Friday night's program, here's what IMPA vice president Terry Daily had to say:

"We have an eclectic assortment of films in all categories this year. New to this annual event is a screening on Friday night featuring ten short films, followed by "The Bride Wore Blood" at 9:00 pm.

In the "Not To Be Missed" category, I would heartily recommend:

"Sales, How to make it Happen." A short farce, disguised as a training film on...well, sales. Sure to make you cringe at the thought of entering a stranger's house intent on a signed dotted line.

"Grace is Gone." A sordid vision of alcohol and love loss, through the eyes of a promising young filmmaker by the name of James Spencer Ward. (High School Entry)

"We Are Theo" plunges us into the surrealistic world of a young eccentric. This often hilarious short film borrows its atmosphere from David Lynch and 80's music videos. (College)

The stand-out picture for my money is the Scott Beck and Bryan Woods film "The Bride Wore Blood." From the opening scene that would make Quentin Tarantino jealous, to the heart-pounding conclusion, these guys mean business. The cinematography is so amazing it's hard to believe these U of I students aren't already in Hollywood.

It takes two

By Eric Clark / CEDAR RAPIDS GAZETTE / April 12, 2006

In “The Chemistry of Dating,” a lonely college student named Ryan uses the scientific method to create an experiment to help him find female companionship.

Based on the films selected for this weekend’s Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival, Ryan isn’t the only one who prefers a partnership. About a quarter of the 42 films in this year’s festival were created by filmmaking teams of two or more people.

In fact, five of the seven feature-length (60 minutes or longer) films in the festival were created by filmmaking teams, including Jenny Stolte and Matt Olson’s “The Chemistry of Dating” and Scott Beck and Bryan Woods’ “The Bride Wore Blood: A Contemporary Western.”

“I’ve gone it alone before, and it’s a lot of work to do every single thing on your own,” says Stolte, 21, a Hiawatha resident attending Columbia College in Chicago. “Working with another person makes everything easier and more enjoyable.”

While feature-length filmmaking partnerships are prevalent at this year’s festival, the event also features dozens of short films, which run the gamut from narrative to documentary to experimental.

The festival, now in its seventh year, was founded in 2001 to provide a venue for Iowa filmmakers to screen their work. For the last four years, the festival has taken place at Collins Road Theatres, where films are shown on three screens over the course of two days.

Eric Dean Freese, who handles marketing and media relations for the festival, says Cedar Rapids Independent Filmmakers, the group that organizes the event, received a record 112 submissions for this year’s festival. Films are required to have at least a minor connection to Iowa.

“The film festival is very healthy,” says Freese, 36, who is senior art director at Marketing and Communications Strategies Inc. in Cedar Rapids. “We added about four or five staff members this year to make things go even more smoothly than in the past.”

For the co-directors of “The Chemistry of Dating,” the festival has become a regular screening opportunity for their films. Stolte previously has had three films selected for the festival and Olson has had one.

“Overall, I’m really impressed with the festival,” says Olson, 24, whose day job is creating corporate videos in Chicago. “They pay a lot of attention to detail, and I like how the judges give critiques at the end of the weekend.”

Olson says “The Chemistry of Dating,” an 84-minute comedy, was inspired by, of all things, “Dracula” by Bram Stoker. After reading the novel, which is written in the epistolary form of

letters, telegrams and diary entries, Olson wrote a short story about the college dating scene in a similar style.

Olson and Stolte had the short story turned into a script by a friend who incorporated the science-class theme into the screenplay.

They finished “The Chemistry of Dating” about a month ago after a year of work and they’re now shopping it to as many film festivals as possible.

“We definitely would love it if something would come out of this film that would further our careers, but we really just did it for the experience of getting something like this under our belts,” Stolte says.

Catch “The Chemistry of Dating” at 8:36 p.m. Friday and 10:01 a.m. Saturday.

Two filmmakers who already have accumulated loads of accolades are Beck and Woods, co-directors of “The Bride Wore Blood.”

The University of Iowa seniors, who both are longtime participants in the festival, in 2005 won mtvU’s Best Film on Campus: Trailer Competition for one of their previous films, “University Heights.”

For winning the competition, Beck and Woods were awarded a development deal with MTV Films.

While they waited for the details of the deal to be ironed out (they still are waiting), they spent nearly six months making “The Bride Wore Blood,” a 60-minute thriller that acts as an homage to the spaghetti Westerns of the ’60s.

In “The Bride Wore Blood,” a bounty hunter is hired to protect a bride-to-be. When the bride ends up dead, the bounty hunter embarks on a voyage to avenge her death, only to find that not everything is as it seems.

Woods, 22, says he and Beck came up with the idea for the movie after meeting with Scott Morschhauser of Bettendorf band The Metrolites, who wanted to score a movie for the filmmaking duo. Morschhauser delivered demos inspired by the work of Italian composer Ennio Morricone, and Beck and Woods formed “The Bride Wore Blood” around the music.

“It was a really cool experience,” Woods says. “It was the first time we’ve had a composer come in and write music specifically for our movie.”

Having been friends since sixth grade and working together since they started shooting movies with their action figures shortly thereafter, Beck, 22, says his partnership with Woods is built to last.

“Our friendship has given us the opportunity to be open and honest with each other about our work,” Beck says. “We have similar interests in terms of movies and books and music, and together we have a singular vision.”

“The Bride Wore Blood” will be screened at 3:06 and 7:35 p.m. Saturday.

Talking pictures

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / April 8, 2007

It's a small but devoted group — those who make films in the Quad-Cities.

But they will be celebrated April 21 at the first “entrepreneur’s film festival,” called “Film Fest Quad-Cities,” at the Capitol Theatre in Davenport, sponsored by the Iowa Small Business Development Center, or SBDC.

The SBDC helped gather the filmmakers recently for a roundtable discussion on what it means to make movies in the Quad-Cities and what the future holds for their art.

Participating were:

- Max Allan Collins, a Muscatine, Iowa, filmmaker whose work — “Mommy,” “Mommy’s Day,” “Real Time: Siege at Lucas Street Market” and “Shades of Noir” — has been compiled into “The Black Box,” a three-DVD set.
- Phil Dingeldein, whose Rock Island-based dphilms production company has grown to do national projects, including segments of “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and “Dr. Phil,” as well as the upcoming shoot of a concert by country singer Kenny Chesney for a DVD.
- Ed Isenberg, graphic designer and computer animation artist for Avolux Media, a Moline video production and graphic design studio.
- Greg Marten, director of the video department, and Denise Hollmer, videographer and editor for Silver Oaks Communications, a Moline company that is adding mainstream work to the corporate communications it has done for more than 20 years.
- Doug Miller, a longtime entrepreneur who recently has worked as production manager for Italian brothers Pupi and Antonio Avati on their movie “The Hideout,” which was filmed in the Quad-City region last summer.
- Scott Morschhauser, a longtime Quad-City area musician — first with The Kabalas, then The Metrolites — who is branching out into soundtrack and musical score work for area films.
- Bryan Woods and Scott Beck, the Bettendorf filmmakers whose company, Bluebox Limited, has produced 18 movies. The University of Iowa seniors won the “Best Film on Campus” award from MTVU, a college division of the MTV cable channel, and a contract for a major motion picture.

Here are excerpts of the sometimes-lively conversation about filmmaking in this area:

What does it mean to be a filmmaker in the Quad-Cities in 2007?

Beck: Bryan and I grew up in this age of digital media emerging, and the last 10 years have been a time of incredible resources, of new things happening in the film industry. One of the great things is that you no longer have to be in Hollywood or New York to make films happen. Everybody here is able to make these films out of the Quad-Cities. The talent is here, the resources are here. In the Quad-Cities, we can combine these and make our own film industry. It's not Hollywood, but it's something different. We're able to reach people nationwide, worldwide, with our material.

Collins: Phil ... and I started in 1994, when we met and worked on "Mommy," the first feature to be done in Iowa for a long, long time. ... We were at the beginning of this digital era, one of Sony's first digital cameras. ... I remember sitting around with Doug and talking about "Can we shoot movies here?" The technology was starting to get friendlier and Hollywood wasn't holding all the keys to the kingdom. ...

What we discovered is how people in the Midwest are excited about helping you. They're not jaded. The idea of a movie being made is not something that happens every day, so you can get a level of support that you couldn't get in Hollywood. If you tried to shoot in a neighborhood in Hollywood, everyone would be out with their hands and billfolds open and you were supposed to fill both. ... It's friendly and supportive. ... Virtually every project since, we've had the same level of support and cooperation. ... I believe the Quad-Cities as an area is poised to be a little Hollywood. You have a very good tax incentives program in Illinois, one of what could be the premier tax incentive programs in Iowa, and on the river you can play Chinese restaurant and have two from Column A and two from Column B and have a very attractive place for us as indigenous filmmakers and others coming in. I'm more interested in us doing it.

Miller: When the Avatis first came here, they were amazed at how people received them. In Italy, they were used to people shooting (movies), looking in front of the lens. Here, they politely say, "Can we watch for a while?" Not get in the way, very polite. The support people are very excited.

Collins: And it pumps a lot of money into the community. While we may make the films here, we're going to be bringing a certain amount of people in. I'm a big believer in "crewing up," as they say, bringing in as few people as possible. But they do come in, staying in motels, eating in restaurants, living here and spending money. It's good for the community in that sense, too.

Beck: We haven't spent more than \$600 on any of our films, and that's just a testament to the area about how resourceful it is, and how many people are willing to help make these productions. We're able to find talent here who are willing to work for free. You can't go out to Los Angeles and make these kinds of films for this kind of money.

Dingeldein: We could be in Chicago, we could be in New York, we could be in L.A. We chose to do our work here because it's a much better place to live. But every day, we say, "Yes, we're in Rock Island, we're 2 1/2 hours away from Chicago, but we still do the same kind of stuff they do in Chicago." ... Every day, we hear, "How can you be any good if you're in Rock Island?" I tell them we just got plumbing last week and it is amazing. ... We constantly fight that little thing on a daily basis.

How can you overcome that reputation, that stereotype?

Dingeldein: Once you get your foot in the door somewhere, it just keeps going out. If I told half the people what I do half the time, they go, “Really?” Constantly, we do stuff that puts us on another level, but we come back home to Rock Island.

Collins: Here’s an irony: Musco Lighting, which is used by nearly every Hollywood production — the “Mus” in Musco is Muscatine. When we did shoot “Mommy” in Muscatine, one of the scenes was in a junkyard literally in Musco’s backyard. ... When we can get to the position where we’re looking beyond making one picture, where we can say to them, “We’re finished with this picture and have another one due next year and there more in the pipeline,” they can look at us as content providers — little studios. It will be to their benefit to treat us better, to encourage us, because we’re not just some guys who went on to make one movie.

Hollmer: Here we are in Moline, Ill., and we have a lot of talent in our company — but no one gets to see what we do because we do stuff for a very limited audience. That’s why we decided to use that talent toward making more movies and stuff everyone can see. ... We have the skills and we have the people to do it, so why not do it ourselves?

There’s a lot of talk about the future. What do you see for this area in five or 10 years?

Dingeldein: We are really in the works on building a production center, a film production center — business, operations, everything. We want to make a movie a year, a substantial movie a year. We can base it out of here, live here, work here and make it happen.

Miller: The incentive legislation will not only help those folks shooting around here, but the efficiency of shooting. With both of those elements being helped and incentivized, you’ll see a cross-pollination of the two. ... We want to retain young people, we want to have more young people coming here. Nothing excites young people like the movies. Nothing.

Isenberg: Speed is going to change everything. Bandwidth is going to be higher, computers are going to be faster. You’ll have PCs that can address more than 3GB of RAM in the future. We have an employee who moved to Arizona because she wanted to be close to her parents. We’re still working with her, we’re just using an FTP site.

Nelsen: I don’t see us getting away from our core service to the corporate client. I do see us getting into more short films. We all agree it’d be great fun to have an opportunity to do a feature. Maybe more short films. With technology changing so fast, we may take what we do now and completely change it in five years.

Collins: What I’d like to see is steady production, so we don’t have to start over each time. That’s the backbreaker. You do one and you’ve got to start over. I envy what the Bluebox guys do because they’ve kept moving forward. They’re like sharks — they don’t sleep. I’d like to make films at the \$1 million level. Can we do it? I think we can.

Morschhauser: My goal is just to keep working with everybody here and get better and better at writing that music that ties in with what you're seeing, that ties in with that emotion, whatever it is.

Beck: We want to be working on a larger scale. With Bryan and me, our productions cost \$600 and we don't want to be that way forever. We want to get to the next level ... where we have several million dollars to be making a movie with.

Woods: We would be so happy if we could just keep making movies and keep working in Iowa. For us, there's no better place to make a movie. The state is so beautiful, and you can tell stories there. We think Iowa stories should be told, too.

Blockbuster from Iowa?

By Deanna Truman-Cook / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / January 28, 2007

Scott Beck's dream always has been to make films in Iowa.

Beck is a University of Iowa senior who already has snagged a film deal with MTV. He operates Bluebox Limited Films with fellow student Bryan Woods.

But to make his dream come true, Beck said much depends on the state of Iowa.

"We would really like to see Iowa pass film incentives," said Beck, 22. "We want to continue writing, producing and directing in Iowa."

Rep. Mark Davitt, D-Indianola, plans to file a film incentive bill this week. He said he thinks it has a good chance of passing.

"I am very optimistic," Davitt said. "There are a lot more people really listening this year and paying attention to the discussion."

Beck, like many Eastern Iowa filmmakers, is keeping his fingers crossed it will.

Convincing producers to shoot in the state ultimately comes down to money.

If neighboring states have incentive packages offering multiple tax breaks for filmmakers and Iowa does not, it is a no-brainer which state will get the film, Beck said.

Beck and Woods won an MTV student filmmaking contest in December 2005, which included a movie deal.

Though still negotiating with MTV on the specifics, Beck said it is looking to be, at the very least, a million dollar project and one he would like to have filmed in his home state.

"If it got to that stage when they were putting the film in production, a tax incentive in Iowa would make a good argument to bring the film here," he said. "But if there is not an incentive in Iowa, it is pretty impossible to negotiate with a major studio to shoot in Iowa."

A film incentive bill is not new. In fact, Davitt has been championing for one for the past three years.

He feels that bipartisan support has been growing for the film each year.

So does Tom Wheeler, manager of the Iowa Film Office.

As word spreads on how film incentives can help bring in more money to the state, support goes up, Wheeler said.

People are realizing that Iowa cannot compete against other states that have the incentives, he said.

"It comes down to a choice in the Midwest, not simply Iowa," Wheeler said. "Producers are shopping in Illinois, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota.

"If we don't have incentives, they are just going to skip right over us because the dollar can go further in the other places. It is just a simple business decision."

One of the last Midwest states to pass film incentives was Wisconsin, whose bill goes into effect July 1.

There has been little opposition to the incentives, Wheeler said.

One of the last larger films to be shot in the state is "The Final Season," shot in Norway and Cedar Rapids in summer 2006.

Producer Steve Schott estimates that for the film they spent about \$1.5 million in the state for goods and services alone. He estimates that the crew spent another half a million dollars on food.

More than 3,000 hotel nights were booked and more than 30 cars rented.

But more importantly than the money, valuable film training was provided to dozens of Iowans, Schott said.

Schott, a Des Moines resident, said the decision to film in Iowa was not easy to make.

The big reason the decision was made was because the film was based on the true story of the 1991 Norway High School baseball team.

Schott estimates that he and his partners missed out on about \$400,000 in tax rebates by choosing to shoot in Iowa.

"It was a very hard decision to stay here, but ultimately we decided to do that because we thought it was best for the story," he said.

To Schott, film incentives are a "win-win situation."

"We feel like filmmakers bring a lot of positive exposure to the state of Iowa, and it will really continue to take the message of Iowa being about good valued people off to the rest of the world and help bring people to Iowa," he said.

In the last few years, the number of film inquiries coming into the Iowa Film Office has been decreasing, mainly because Iowa does not have film incentives, he said.

The legislation that Davitt and others are working on would have a \$100,000 threshold to entice independent films to come to the state.

Bruce Heppner-Elgin, founder of the Iowa Digital Filmmakers Guild and a Washington resident, knows of dozens of filmmakers across the state who will be lobbying for the bill to pass.

"The film incentives are very important in that they first off give a level playing field so we can compete with states around us," Heppner-Elgin said. "There is money out there that Iowa is missing."

Young Q-C filmmakers taste success

By Adam Hurlburt / ST. AMBROSE BUZZ / November 30, 2006

When one thinks of eastern Iowa, the words "award winning film makers" aren't usually the first to scroll into view. Two Bettendorf natives, however, are doing their best to change that, carrying over 18 films, 10 of which have earned the right to the moniker "award winning."

University of Iowa students and Bettendorf residents Scott Beck and Bryan Woods have been making movies together since 1996. In 2001 the duo started a production company together, Bluebox Limited.

"I've always been interested in telling stories and doing so through filmmaking," 21 year-old Beck said.

There is no shortage of passion in these two filmmakers. When asked what inspires them to make movies, both men practically gush.

"My ideas are inspired by so many things," 21 year-old Beck said. "Sometimes I'm inspired by stories that I come across on the news, other times I'm inspired by images and more abstract things, like the way the sky looks at a certain time of day."

"Scott and I try to draw as much inspiration from life as possible," said Woods.

Both Beck and Woods carry a notebook with them everywhere they go, just incase inspiration comes knocking.

Together, Beck and Woods have nearly a lifetime of interest in film, garnering them a large background of influences to draw inspiration from.

"'The Sixth Sense' made me start taking movies more seriously," Woods said. "It came at the right time in my life. I was in middle school and had been making movies as a hobby for quite a while up to that point."

Both Woods and Beck cite director M. Night Shyamalan as a major influence, as well as Steven Spielberg and Robert Zemeckis.

Shyamalan's influence can be felt in Beck and Wood's newest release "The Bride Wore Blood." This film features the kind of smack-you-in-the-face plot twist that Shyamalan has made his name with. Make no mistake, however, "The Bride Wore Blood" maintains an original voice throughout the whole film, something that many young filmmakers struggle with.

Beck and Woods are no stranger to the troubles of attaining credibility that plagues young filmmakers.

"It certainly takes a while to be taken seriously," said Woods. "The second people start to think they are working on a 'student film' you lose them a little bit."

These two young filmmakers do not let this phase them, however.

"Anybody can pick up a camera and shoot, I believe that if you have good work and an interesting story, it will rise to the top, providing you put your work out there," a confident Beck stated.

After many local successes with their films, all of that hard work and confidence finally began to pay off on a larger scale.

In 2004, Beck and Woods submitted a short film to Project Greenlight, a contest held annually by actors Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, conceived with the intention of helping young filmmakers get a chance at the big time.

That year Project Greenlight received over 1,700 submissions, Beck and Wood's film ended up making into the top 50.

"We were blown away and incredibly honored to have made it that far," said Beck.

The Project Greenlight ordeal was followed directly by an even larger success story next year. "In December 2005, Bryan and I won MTVU's Best Film on Campus contest, in which the prize was a development deal with MTV Films," Beck said. "We are currently negotiating the contract, but basically we will be developing a screenplay with MTV Films."

Part of what makes Woods and Beck's success story so endearing to Quad-City locals is that the two filmmakers base all of their film's in the Q-C area and draw all of their talent from the area, this includes production assistants, actors, and even local musicians.

For their latest film, "The Bride Wore Blood," Beck and Woods contacted Mike Kennedy, St. Ambrose University assistant professor of speech, theatre and mass communication.

"I was originally introduced to Bryan through Paul Koch," Kennedy said. "Bryan filmed some theatre productions for us. He called me one day and said that he needed someone my age for a part in his new film."

Kennedy plays a retiring hitman in the film; a grizzled, gum chewing, mustachioed bad guy whom has no problem changing the course of a young boys life with one shot from a hand held revolver.

Kennedy was very impressed with how professional Beck and Woods were in all aspects stating that they don't act anywhere near their age.

"They really deserve an audience," he said.

On Saturday Nov. 11, Beck and Woods debuted "The Bride Wore Blood" to a packed house at the Putnam IMAX Theater.

Opening night for the film was such a success that a second showing of the film was required to ensure that all patrons got a chance to view the film.

"It was a great feeling to walk into the IMAX lobby and see the line out the doors," said Beck.

Beck and Woods are currently working on a few ideas for their venture with MTV Films.

"We have several concepts, and we'll be finding the one that best suits us and MTV," Beck said.

For more information on Beck and Wood's films, check out www.blueboxlimited.com, or www.thebrideworeblood.com.

'The Bride Wore Blood' is a true 'spaghetti Midwestern'

By Linda Cook / QUAD-CITY TIMES / November 11, 2006

Just think what they'll be able to do once they graduate.

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods may be the hardest-working filmmakers anywhere ... especially considering that they're still in college.

Now they've added "The Bride Wore Blood: A Contemporary Western" to their Bluebox Limited resumé, they've also added a new genre to the numerous films they've already completed.

They call this a contemporary western, but I'd call it a "spaghetti Midwestern," because it's so reminiscent of the Sergio Leone "spaghetti westerns" such as "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" and "A Fistful of Dollars."

This is peopled with characters who, like the Man With No Name, are introduced to the audience not as character studies but as events unfold.

Christy Sullivan stars as The Bride, who is being protected by The Hired Gun, played by Travis Shepherd (the Bluebox productions of "University Heights" and "Her Summer"). Shane Simmons plays The Groom, who is assured by The Hired Gun that he will keep The Bride safe.

But such is not to be. When The Bride disappears, it's up to The Hired Gun to track her down, and to determine exactly who else is involved in a string of murder and treachery that includes some nifty plot twists.

Bluebox fans will welcome the return of performers such as Justin Marxen ("For Always" and "University Heights"), who plays a police officer; and Jim Siokos, who was a star in "University Heights," which also included Sabien Minter, who is The Boyfriend in this production.

Woods and Beck shot this while they were waiting for a development deal from MTV Films. This started out to be a short film, but, as they fleshed out the story line and the characters, grew into a bigger production that led to lengthy shoots.

What's amazing is that the filmmakers don't shoot so much on a shoestring as an aglet — they spent only \$600 or \$700 on the entire production that is full of well-shot scenes in Bettendorf, Davenport, Iowa City and McCausland in Iowa and Barstow, Ill.

You can't watch the movie without noticing the score, which was written by Scott Morschhauser of The Metrolites and The Kabalas fame. It's terrific — let me know when you start selling the CD on your Web site store, guys.

I keep wondering what they're going to create when they have the backing from MTV. Scott and Bryan, you're not the only ones waiting for that contract!

Bride may wear blood; Bluebox wears success

By Soheil Rezayazdi / THE DAILY IOWAN / November 10, 2006

Success for Scott Beck and Bryan Woods hardly even registers as news anymore. So entrenched in acclaim, the filmmakers' prizes and honors have become the local cinematic equivalent of starving African children. We read about their award-snatching films and think, "Yeah, what else is new?"

Well, how about five more awards?

Made under their production company, Bluebox Limited, the duo's latest film stomped competitors at the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival in Des Moines in October, earning five honors, including best feature and best director.

The Bettendorf natives will debut their hour-long film, *The Bride Wore Blood*, at the Putnam IMAX Theatre in Davenport, 1717 W. 12th St., on Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

"We were waiting for our development-deal contract to come back from MTV, so we thought 'Well, it's taken a couple months; why don't we just make another film, just as an exercise?' " Beck said, noting that the film began with a sparse 15-page script. "Over time, [*The Bride Wore Blood*] kind of grew from an exercise into a short film on its own."

In December 2005, the duo sparked the envy of nearly every film student in Iowa when MTV Films crowned Beck's trailer for *University Heights* the winner of The Best Film on Campus contest, offering Beck a development deal with MTV Films.

Along with such honors, the two have also been top-three-percentile finalists for Project Greenlight and have been hired to film a documentary for 68-year-old Italian filmmaker Pupi Avati's upcoming film *The Hideout*.

The Bride Wore Blood's intricate plot involves two bounty hunters, a bride and groom, a corrupt cop, and a splattering of, well, blood. As an unabashed throwback to the days of Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns, the film sports many of the Bluebox team's best known trademarks: smooth tracking shots, crisp visuals, an ensemble story line, and rumbling, David Lynch-style sound design.

Beck's monotone speech and plainspoken attitude signal he hasn't let praise morph him into an egomaniac. While there remains a subculture of students who adamantly disparage Beck's work - either to his face, secondhand, or, on one occasion, on message boards - Beck tries not to mull over the negative.

"I don't need to deal with that, because my concentration is on how I can make the best film possible," the UI senior said. "You can trash talk my past work as much as you want. That's your opinion, whether it stems from honesty or from jealousy. I don't want to put my focus on that, because it's not going to help me become a better filmmaker - unless if it's valid criticism."

Woods, co-writer and director of *The Bride Wore Blood*, had the opposite opinion. A single criticism, even if buried within a hundred compliments, he said, can haunt him indefinitely.

Although they prefer to test-screen their films prior to release, the two simply used the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival screening as a trial run to get feedback on the film because of a lack of time.

It was encouraging for Woods that *The Bride Wore Blood* - even with three absent scenes, rough sound, and placeholder music - could still round up five of the night's top awards. Even so, the UI senior worries the film might be "too much of a style piece without enough story."

"Then again, that's what the spaghetti Westerns were," Woods said with a laugh. "You don't really care about Clint Eastwood's character; you just want to see him go around and shoot people and have fun. I hope that's what we captured."

UI filmmakers debut new film at IMAX

By Deanna Truman-Cook / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / November 9, 2006

This weekend, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods will premiere their 22nd film, "The Bride Wore Blood," at the IMAX Theatre in Davenport.

Though the title is gruesome, the film really isn't, Woods said.

"There is violence and there is blood, but nothing graphic or explicit," he said.

In fact, he and Beck give the movie a PG-13 rating. The film will be shown 7:30 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$7.

The movie is a contemporary Western about a bounty hunter who is hired to protect a bride-to-be, Beck said.

Not wanting to give too much away, he will only say that "when secrets reveal the past, blood is shed and a deadly mystery unfolds."

Both filmmakers are senior communication studies majors at the University of Iowa.

Together, the pair runs Bluebox Limited Films.

Last December, the two won an MTV student filmmaking contest, which included a movie deal.

While negotiating with MTV on the specifics, which they are still doing, the pair grew restless and produced another film, "The Bride Wore Blood."

"It really stems from our love of Westerns," Beck said.

To finance the \$600 production, he auctioned off on eBay a 42-inch Plasma HDTV, another prize awarded to him from the MTV competition.

To Woods, it is the duo's best work ever.

"I think we have really taken the low budget movie as far as you can," he said.

'Til Bloody Death Do They Part

By Mike Schulz / RIVER CITIES' READER / November 8, 2006

Audiences who attend the latest film by Bluebox Limited's Scott Beck and Bryan Woods - a contemporary western entitled "The Bride Wore Blood" - should be thrilled for the chance to see it at Davenport's Putnam Museum & IMAX Theatre. (Having recently won Best Feature, Best Director, and three additional awards at Iowa's Wild Rose Independent Film Festival, the movie makes its area debut on November 11.) The local directors/writers/producers - both of whom, at age 22, seem almost preternaturally gifted - make spectacular use of space and sound, and the film's IMAX presentation lends the work deserved grandeur; it's a fittingly huge venue for Beck's and Woods' talents.

But when you get the chance, see the movie again, watch the cat-and-mouse sequence between the two bounty hunters, and then tell me: How did they do that?

The scene I'm referring to arrives about halfway through the movie. Our protagonist, known only as The Hired Gun (Travis Shepherd), has been employed to protect The Bride (Christy Sullivan), whose husband (Shane Simmons) believes she may be in mortal danger. Yet tragedy ensues, and The Hired Gun - who, it's suggested, may be in love with his charge - finds himself stalking Jack Lavine (Jim Siokos), a fellow bounty hunter, in his suburban home. (In "The Bride Wore Blood's" prologue, they're actually referred to as "bounty killers.")

As the men encircle one another, Beck's and Woods' camera glides along the main floor of the house, and the escalating tension is remarkably well-sustained; only a handful of Hollywood films this year have achieved a similar effect. Yet at the end of their edgy pas de deux, The Hired Gun walks through an empty living room, stops in close-up, and the camera, without breaking the shot, pans just slightly to the right - and there, standing behind him, is Jack Levine.

Watching that moment at the Putnam was thrilling, to be sure, but seeing it again later on a DVD screener was astounding - where the hell did Lavine come from? There's nothing remotely self-conscious about the trick, and the grace with which it's staged is incredible; I rewound the sequence three times to try to figure out how Beck and Woods pulled it off, and still have no idea.

I reference the moment not merely because it's one of many highlights in "The Bride Wore Blood," but because it underscores the natural ease and fluidity of Beck's and Woods' style. Their shots here are dramatic without calling attention to the composition, and the measured, confident tone of the movie is revealed in the unbroken takes and lingering dread; you feel the co-directors getting exactly the effects they're shooting for. Unlike many young filmmakers, the Bluebox impresarios aren't showing off their talents here - they're just showing them.

In "The Bride Wore Blood," they're also showing a talent for inventive narrative structure. As The Hired Gun begins to uncover The Bride's true nature, and that of those who may want her dead, flashbacks and chronological detours lead to further levels of deception and

gamesmanship; not until the final, fatalistic shot will the story be explained in full. This cinematic-puzzle style can easily lead to incoherence, but Beck and Woods always keep the plotting lucid. (It helps, of course, that there are fewer than 10 characters to keep track of in the film.)

They also pepper the storytelling with shots so assured they nearly give you the giggles: a gradual, 180-degree reveal of The Hired Gun's truck during a railroad-track rendezvous, a close-up into a burning wastebasket suggesting a "professional's" descent into hell. At just under an hour, "The Bride Wore Blood" is suffused with memorable images and impressive visuals.

I'd argue that it might have been better at just under 50 minutes. Bride's style is partly an homage to Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns - featuring appropriate, magnificent spaghetti-western music by Scott Morschhauser, whose band, the Metrolites, provides a great, funky title theme - and so it requires long takes. But a few are too long.

At one point, The Hired Gun watches a man attempt to mow his lawn, and at three minutes the scene goes from torpid (because nothing's happening) to funny (because the procrastination begins to feel like a joke) and back to torpid again (because you realize it probably isn't one.) Similarly, an early encounter between The Hired Gun and Levine features too many shots of the killers staring one another down; although Morschhauser's score gives the scene some comic context, the preamble to this potential shoot-out continues for about 10 seconds longer than it needs to. (Considering the strength of the individual shots, though, you can understand why Beck and Woods may have been reluctant to yell "Cut!")

The cast does a fine job of acting inscrutable, yet plays so close to the vest that you may wish for more performance fireworks than you get. Justin Marxen, though, lends heartfelt vigor to his conflicted cop, and the film is stolen early on by Casey Campbell, who tears through a monologue about "ugly chicks" and his unapologetic self-infatuation; Campbell gives his brief role an electric charge reminiscent of Peter Sarsgaard in contemptuous-scumbag mode.

Beck and Woods manage to make the actor's scene captivating without extraneous movement, nerve-racking through silence, and - with Campbell devouring fried chicken on a pristine dining room table - funny without telegraphing or pandering. "The Bride Wore Blood" showcases true talent, and perhaps the filmmakers' most amazing accomplishment is that, as they reveal, their latest work only cost about \$600 to make.

How did they do that?

'Blood' brothers

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / November 5, 2006

It all started as a way to keep their chops up.

Bettendorf natives Scott Beck and Bryan Woods — as their production company, Bluebox Limited — were waiting on MTV Films to make progress after the duo won a student filmmaking contest last year, which included a deal with the cable channel's movie division.

The two — both seniors at the University of Iowa — had been working on writing some screenplays, but hadn't directed anything in more than a year.

"We thought we should get our feet wet again, get our hands back into filmmaking again," Beck said.

While haggling is going on with MTV Films — a corporate restructuring is going on now, but Beck and Woods say eventually MTV will have its own movie studio — the two wanted to make a 10-minute movie for their own sakes.

"What they kept asking us is like, 'Can you send us a sample of your directing work?'," Woods said. "Not that we weren't proud of (previous films), but it didn't really show people what we were like now, today.

"We wanted to have a better representation of what we could do."

That 10-minute movie grew exponentially to "The Bride Wore Blood," a 60-minute movie that will debut later this month on the IMAX screen at the Putnam Museum, Davenport.

They call "Bride" a "contemporary Western," but don't look for horses or cowboy hats. It's more along the lines of the Sergio Leone movies that made Clint Eastwood a star in the early 1970s.

They were encouraged by Scott Morschhauser, leader of the Quad-City surf-spy-noir-spaghetti Western band The Metrolites, who has been moving into more film soundtrack work.

"I liked it right away when I read the script, and I haven't read a lot of scripts lately," Morschhauser said.

Beck and Woods said Morschhauser's score was just what they were looking for.

"It really compliments the movie, because the score we were going for has the 1960s, '70s feel to it," Woods said. "And I think it's something where everything — the production design, the costumes — we weren't trying to push it overboard."

"As a composer, he was very in tune with the story, very aware of it," Beck said.

In the movie, the Hired Gun (played by Travis Shepherd), a bounty killer, must protect the Bride (Christy Sullivan), but she vanished, and her body appears in an abandoned train yard. The Hired Gun must find the killer, and avenge her murder.

Beck and Woods share both the writing and directing credits for “The Bride Wore Blood.” It’s tough enough for any filmmakers to share writing and directing duties — but the longtime friends and 10-year moviemaking veterans say it’s never been a problem.

“To me, it feels like one (voice),” Woods said. “It’s bizarre how it works.”

There’s no division of labor, said Morschhauser.

“I’ve looked for it and I can’t find it,” he said.

In writing, they alternate, each refining the other’s work, until the finished product is complete.

“We kept bouncing it back and forth off each other, so it kept evolving with our own personal tastes — but those tastes are very similar within themselves,” Woods said.

“We try to put our heads together and think what’s best for the film,” Beck said.

All but one of the nine-member cast has been in previous Bluebox films. The two said the movie was easy to cast.

“We knew their strengths, we knew their weaknesses, we knew it would be a comfortable working environment,” Beck said.

Morschhauser said he was amazed to see how smoothly the production went.

“Everybody kind of knew what they had to do, and everybody knew what they had to do to chip in,” he said. “It was like a machine, it was really neat.”

Bluebox trades big screen for bigger one for "Bride"

By Sean Leary / MOLINE DISPATCH / November 5, 2006

In December 2005, the Bettendorf duo of Bryan Woods, 22, and Scott Beck, 22, grabbed first prize in the mtvU Best Film on Campus Contest. In addition to a development deal with MTV Films (more on that later), the pair won a 42" plasma HDTV.

However, true to their real passion, filmmaking, they decided to sell the TV on eBay about a bounty hunter hired to protect a bride-to-be. However, when secrets from the past break open, a deadly mystery unfolds.

The film features an all-local cast and crew and its original score was composed by Scott Morschhauser and performed by The Metrolites. It's already garnered 10 award nominations from the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival.

Recently, Scott Beck took time out of his busy schedule to answer a few of our questions about the new film and the future of Bluebox.

Sean Leary: What led you to do a contemporary western?

Scott Beck: I think it all starts from the idea that we want to try new things and not lock ourselves into one certain tone or genre. I think it's important to push yourself and work in new ways, and the western genre certainly gave us this chance. Both Bryan and I had an interest in doing a western and part of that stemmed from meeting Scott Morschhauser. He's an avid fan of spaghetti westerns and loves the music of Ennio Morricone and that really rubbed off on us. So in a strange way, it almost feels like we made the movie so he could score it.

SL: What artists influenced you in embarking upon this project, and during it?

SB: Sergio Leone's films were a great inspiration, just because of their boldness and great characters and landscapes. His scenes are just extremely powerful through visuals, and so as directors, Bryan and I sort of approached this film as an exercise in directing like that. However, Leone is the obvious influence, as his westerns are some of the most popular of the genre. There are so many other artists who we have learned from, and every little bit has helped us in storytelling. The story and the characters are revealed in a non-chronological way, so the audience discovers more at the same time as the characters, so I guess even films like Billy Wilder's "Witness for the Prosecution" and Chris Nolan's "Memento" have left their mark with us.

SL: What was the origin of this script in particular and how did it evolve?

SB: The film all stemmed from us waiting for our development deal with MTV to go through negotiations. Things had taken some time, and we decided to just go ahead and make another film. We had been writing screenplays for the last year-and-a-half, but hadn't directed anything in a while, so we said "Let's do this, let's make another movie." Well, the script was originally about five to 10 pages and it was going to take us a couple days to shoot it. But eventually, after revisions and everything, it turned into 30 pages. Then when we got to shooting, it took about 16 days and the final cut of the film runs about an hour.

Since we thought the production was originally only going to take a couple days, we wrote the parts for actors we had worked with before. We knew their strengths, weaknesses, and logistically speaking, we knew their time schedules. It was great to work with familiar faces, because it was a comfortable atmosphere, and it was fun to challenge each other to do the best we all could do.

SL: How do you feel this film is an evolution for your style, and how do you see it informing future work?

SB: I don't think Bryan and I could even see a "style" in our work, if it's even present. I guess if there is a style, it probably revolves around the fact that we care about our characters, our visuals, and we try to bring something interesting to the table. I mean, our last two films were all about characters. "Her Summer" is kind of a ghost story, suspense film, but it's really about its characters. "University Heights" is the same way, only in more obvious ways. So I guess we like showing people with three-dimensions, and in "The Bride," it's all based around moral judgments and people who shield their past.

SL: What gave you the idea to sell the TV to raise funds?

SB: There was no question about whether or not I was going to keep the TV. It was sold before I even won it! Honestly though, we entered the mtvU Best Film on Campus contest to win that development deal and sell the TV so we could fund movies. There's been some other contests that we have entered where the prizes have been cars or something expensive like that, but we've only entered those contests to sell the prize and use the money for films. So when I got the HDTV delivered, I immediately put it on eBay and sold it to the highest bidder. And luckily, we got some good money for it, so it was able to fund "The Bride," which turned out to be our most expensive film to date. It's like this -- if either Bryan or I won the lottery, we'd spend millions on making a movie here in the Quad-Cities, no question about it.

SL: How did the collaboration with The Metrolites come about, and how did that work out for you?

SB: Scott Morschhauser contacted us in early 2005 about doing soundtrack work, so we met and just discussed our interests and what we were doing and what we wanted to do. Of course we listened to The Metrolites "In Spy-Fi" CD and loved that, and Bryan and I were really interested in working with Scott. Over time, we just kept in touch and he worked on themes, and eventually, when Bryan & I decided to make "The Bride," we approached Scott about doing the score and he was definitely in.

It was a great experience, and the spaghetti western genre was a perfect fit for Scott, since he's a big fan of those films. The nice thing about working with Scott, is that he really understood the script from day one. He was always on the same page as us and he knew what direction we wanted. Bryan and I are incredibly happy with the final result.

SL: What is the status of the MTV deal? What are the snags, and when do you see it coming to fruition?

SB: Paramount and MTV Films were recently restructured, so that has slowed things down a bit. Regardless, things are still on track and they're definitely good. We're still in the negotiation phase, so it may still take a couple months, but things should be happening soon.

SL: If the MTV deal comes through, what do you want to work on for them, and what timeline do you have for doing so?

SB: We have several projects we'd like to do for them, and those projects, of course, will fit into MTV Films' material, but at the same time, Bryan and I will want to keep things fresh and unique. The timeline is dependent on the contract negotiations.

SL: What projects will you be working on next? Ideally, what do you want to do next?

SB: We have a ton of projects that we want to do, and they vary from horror films to comedies. I think it'd be fun to work on a comedy, since we haven't really ventured into that direction yet. There are so many different stories that excite us, so after "The Bride," we're going to have to sit down and figure out where to go from there. Personally, I know there are about four stories that I'm really excited about exploring, and beyond that, there are more than 10 that are a little less developed, but still really intriguing.

SL: In the past you've been influenced by filmmakers like M. Night Shymalan and Alexander Payne. What directors do you feel have had the biggest influence on you, how do you see that in your work, and who is currently among your list of influences or directors you admire?

SB: It sounds obvious, but any good director is an influence and more importantly, a teacher. Payne, Cameron Crowe, Wilder, Hitchcock, Buster Keaton, Woody Allen, Zemeckis; they're all equally important, even though they span genres and time periods. Payne really cares about his characters, and that's something that has stuck with me. His characters aren't just black and white, but they're real people. Payne really has a knack for taking away the glossed, overglamorized look and feel to Hollywood movies, and portraying real life on screen.

One director I incredibly admire is the French filmmaker Jacques Tati. He only made a handful of films in his life, but they're among the best films I have ever seen. They're so full of life and comedy. One of Tati's last films and biggest failures (at the time), "Playtime," is one of my favorite films of all time. In fact, the script was over 400 pages long, and he had memorized every single page -- that's how much he loved and cared about his film. That's something that really inspires me to do better as a filmmaker.

SL: What genre haven't you done that you would really like to do, and why haven't you tackled it yet?

SB: A comedy. A lot of my favorite films are comedies, or at least are films with humor in them. I'm not sure why I haven't tackled it yet. I'm not interested so much in a laugh-a-minute, over-the-top comedy, but something along the lines of "Annie Hall," "Elizabethtown," or "Election." Although, I recently watched Billy Wilder's "One, Two Three," and that's an over-the-top comedy that really delivered and was masterfully directed. Regardless, some of the projects on the backburner are comedies, so it'll happen soon.

SL: You've talked about staying based in the Midwest regardless of how things pan out with the MTV deal. Is that still the plan, and why or why not?

SB: It's definitely the plan. The Midwest and the Quad-Cities is just a great place to make movies. Since movies are a rare commodity around here, film production is exciting, so you get a lot more people interested in helping. We've said this a lot and we mean it -- there's tons of talent around the region. Bringing a large scale production to the area is still a goal for Bryan and me. There are tax incentives in the works for film productions in Iowa, and we're really hoping the bill gets passed, as it would be a huge boost for the many filmmakers throughout the state. That would also make it easier to get bigger productions back in the area that would boost the state's economy and in turn, make Iowa a bigger player in the film industry.

SL: How did the documentary on the Avatis come about? What's it going to be called, what does it cover, and when is it coming out?

SB: Bryan and I were on the set several days while the Avatis were shooting in the Quad-Cities. We shot footage both for ourselves and for the Italian RAI Television channel, which will be producing their own behind-the-scenes documentary. Their documentary will probably accompany the release of the film next year. As far as our documentary, we're kind of on hold, as we want to wait until the release of "The Hideout" (the Avatis' latest film, which was shot in the Quad-Cities earlier this year) and see how it does and if there will be any more to our documentary's "story." There's many different directions we can take the documentary in, but we've discussed the idea of two young filmmakers from Iowa learning from two master filmmakers from Italy.

SL: How do you feel about what you've accomplished so far?

SB: I always feel like there is more that I could be doing to further myself. I'm grateful for all of the opportunities and things that have come our way, but there's always this feeling that I should have accomplished more by now. There's a long road ahead and the film industry is a tough one, so it takes a lot of hard work and persistence. Bryan and I have always known this and we're ready to tackle it, so we're always more focused on the future than the past.

Film duo builds local production business

By John Heiderscheid / QUAD-CITY TIMES / July 24, 2006

“The Bride Wore Blood.” That, for sure, is the first time I’ve started this column with those four words.

Today it seems appropriate, though, because I am profiling Bluebox Limited, a fledgling Quad-City movie production business with big time potential. “The Bride Wore Blood” is the title of the latest Bluebox feature.

Quad-Cities, meet Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, 2003 graduates of Bettendorf High School. And, yes, also prize-winning film makers. Bluebox Limited is an independent filmmaking company operated by Beck and Woods. The company is based out of Iowa. Beck and Woods will be seniors majoring in communications at the University of Iowa in Iowa City come this autumn. Bluebox has produced 13 shorts and four feature films to date. “The Bride Wore Blood” will be the fifth feature.

There are lots of filmmakers in Iowa — many you’ve never heard of. So why profile these guys? Answer: because you will be hearing of them again. In December 2005, Beck & Woods won a development deal with MTV Films.

We sat down recently for lunch to discuss their company, their plans to do business in Iowa, and movies.

Both are articulate, polite and earnest. Neither Scott nor Bryan seemed to have the slightest interest in courting controversy. No shocking hairdos. No body piercings. No profanity. Instead, they show a deep and abiding interest in their work together, which actually began in the sixth grade and continued through their days as high school students. In their junior year they wrote, produced and directed a film on drunk driving that later became part of the Students Against Drunk Driving curriculum.

The duo’s careers gathered momentum when one of their films made Project Greenlight’s top 50, out of about 1,700 submissions from leading artists from all over the United States.

As Beck says, the strong showing at Project Greenlight “helped build a buzz” around the company. (The Project Greenlight winner takes home a film production deal to the tune of \$1 million.) For the uninitiated, “buzz” in Hollywood is a good thing.

Encouraged by their strong showing at Project Greenlight, Beck and Woods entered their film “Shades” in the MTV Productions 2004 “Best Film on Campus” competition.

“Shades” fell just short, finishing in the top three. They hit the jackpot with the next MTV contest. Contestants were asked to submit a two-minute trailer for a movie they would like to

make. (One of the contest judges was John Singleton, of “Boyz n the Hood” fame.) The grand prize: a development deal with MTV.

As a measure of how earnest these guys are, they sold one of their prizes — a giant screen TV — to help fund more movie production. Now that’s serious. The pair currently is finalizing its production deal with MTV and expects to be doing bigger budget movies soon.

Bryan is optimistic that they will be able to continue to produce their movies in and around the Quad-Cities as the budgets keep getting bigger.

For one thing, he says, production costs less here. “Production is just too expensive in Hollywood right now. One hour of location time there can cost more than our entire film budget.”

It’s clear that these guys have a strong attachment to the Quad-Cities and our (hopefully) budding film industry with, for example, the Avati brothers of Italy shooting a feature here later in the summer.

One thing our policymakers could do to help out in Iowa — enact some tax credits for investments in independent film.

Their long-term plans are to build a production company that will allow them to be artists — but artists who sell. Of course, combining art and riches is the goal of many aspiring producers. “We want the dream,” says Bryan.

About “The Bride Wore Blood:” It will run roughly an hour long and spin the tale of a bounty hunter hired to protect a bride-to-be. But it turns out that nothing is as it seems. Very different from these two rising filmmakers, where what you see is very much what you get.

John Heiderscheit, Bettendorf, a former Wall Street finance lawyer, is president and CEO of Midwest Construction Services, a multi-state business services company. He can be contacted at asl@netexpress.net.

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods - Iowa Filmmakers

By Shelbi Thomas / Iowa Alumni Magazine / June 2006

Most college students want their MTV. In Scott Beck and Bryan Woods' case, MTV also wants them. Following a first-place finish in the network's "Best Film on Campus: Trailer Challenge" contest this past winter, the UI communication studies juniors clinched a movie development deal that could lead to a Hollywood career.

Beck and Woods haven't stopped brainstorming since movie directors, MTV staff, and online voters selected the trailer for their drama *University Heights*. To make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the self-taught filmmakers will take time off school to focus on scriptwriting and pitching their movie ideas. They hope to turn their script "Anniversary"—the story of a couple whose marriage is tested when they meet a father desperate to save his dying son—into a blockbuster hit.

Thanks to digital technology and local actors and crew members willing to work for free, Beck and Woods have kept costs on each of their 17 films to under \$300. If "Anniversary" becomes a major motion picture, their budgets will soar into millions of dollars.

The Bettendorf natives have worked toward this goal since sixth grade, when their collaborations featured *Star Wars* action figures. Now, movie-making takes up their every spare moment. Since they formed their own production company, Bluebox, in 2001, their short and feature films have been screened at festivals nationwide and have won several awards, including a top 50 spot in actors Matt Damon and Ben Affleck's "Project Greenlight" competition.

Although they have different tastes—Beck prefers dramatic films, while Woods opts for suspense—the filmmakers thrive off each other's creativity and share equal writing, directing, and producing credit. "We love films, and this is the only thing we can see ourselves doing," says Beck. "It's not just about money; it's about substance and whether the audience will remember the film's message."

Even with Hollywood on the horizon, Beck and Woods ultimately plan to return to the state that nurtured their dreams. "Most movies are made in Los Angeles because that's where the industry is based. Unfortunately, that means most movies are about L.A.," says Woods. "Other places should have their stories told, too."

Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival gets better every year

By Herb Kane / CRITICDOCTOR.com / April 2006

The first time I ever attended the "Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival." was back in 2002. Since then, everything about the film festival has improved each following year.

Festival screenings once took place in a college auditorium and all movies were played on a big screen for digital projection. Thanks to Bruce Taylor, owner of Collins Road Theatres in Marion (just on the edge of Cedar Rapids), the festival now has a permanent home with three full theater screens playing each day.

The festival awards ceremony that takes place in theatre "A" is broadcast simultaneously in Theatres B & C. The utilization of three screens is very nice because now you have the ability to pick and choose what movie you want to see from the festival program or watch all of them due to the convenience of flexible showtimes. It also leaves some breathing room - not having to be in single packed theatre for several hours.

Collins Road Theatres owner Bruce Taylor said at the festival, "When we opened about two and half years-ago, I promised I was going to bring movies to Cedar Rapids that otherwise wouldn't be shown here. The event that we have this weekend is the epitome of films that would never be shown in Cedar Rapids." There is a definite focus on screening independent films year-long at this theatre - setting it apart from all other theaters in the area. Oh and let's not forget what else sets this theatre apart from the others - REAL BUTTER!

Believe me you, if you are not aware of this fact by the time the festival is over, you apparently were not in the presence of Bruce Taylor. During every presentation Taylor was involved in, the word "butter" eventually surface and justifiably so. We all know what most theaters serve these days and it's not real butter. In fact, nothing about it is real. The real butter available here is an extra benefit for theatre-goers.

I personally like the buckets this theatre uses instead of those flimsy, greasy bags you find at other venues. And the best part? It's not only less expensive than other theatres in the area, but you can take your bucket of popcorn to the butter machine and put the butter on yourself! Need I say more? Of course not! Taylor will have plenty more to say about it next year.

Taylor, along with CRIFM (Cedar Rapids Independent Filmmakers) board members Scott Chrisman, Eric Dean Freese, Christina Miller and Carrie Miell have created a fun venue that allows filmmakers to showcase their talent to the general audience and make connections with others in the industry.

Over 50 films were screened this year at the "Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival" and based on the screenings I saw in previous years, the films have not only increased in quantity,

but quality. I also like seeing the program filled with mostly short films - allowing us to see artistic work by more filmmakers.

Seminar presenters this year included John Houghton (Director of Photography), John Reasoner (Multi-Media Director, Rockwell Collins) and Bettendorf, Iowa filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods. I did attend the session with Beck and Woods and they are very excited about filmmaking and for good reason. In 2005, the two 21 year-old filmmakers won MTVU's "Best Film on Campus Contest." What does this mean for them? For starters, they won a home theatre system (which they sold on Ebay to put the money toward future filmmaking) and a development deal with MTV Films.

Beck and Woods (Blueboxlimited.com) discussed a variety of filmmaking topics including how to make movies at a very inexpensive price. "Making films today is not expensive. It's cheap because of digital," said Woods. "Most of the budgets for our films have been \$50 to \$300." Casting people to work for free certainly helps, too..

Film is generally too expensive for the average independent filmmaker - and much more difficult to edit. Digital allows almost anyone to make a movie on some level. In fact, Woods encourages anyone with a digital camera to start now. "Just keep making as many movies as you can and you'll learn from experience," said Woods.

Experience, for Beck and Woods, is the what got them where they are today. Taking on multiple tasks such as editing, directing, sound, cinematography, and writing is not only cost-effective - it will benefit you in the long-run. Beck said, "When you're working with a larger crew, you can understand what each person is doing and appreciate what they are doing."

When the festival concluded, all was invited to the LongBranch restaurant/bar for the post-festival party. I figured we would all go there and relax and talk about how wonderful this year's festival turned out. Nope! Let's just put it this way. When you invite a bunch of filmmakers and actors to a bar on Karoke night - look out! Check out the Critic Doctor Photo Gallery and you'll see what I mean.

The "Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival" is getting better and better with each year. Of course, Bruce Taylor might say, "It's getting butter and butter each year." Either way, we're right!

MtvU puts students in director's seat, chance to win prize

By Nick Paulson / IOWA STATE DAILY / March 29, 2006

Student filmmakers from Iowa State and across the country will have a chance to win an MTV golden popcorn bucket. MTV's college network, mtvU, will be handing out the first "Student Filmmaker Award" at the June 3 MTV Movie Awards.

Ross Martin, head of programming for mtvU, said he is excited about the opportunity the award will give students across the nation.

"Because there are so many talented filmmakers on campuses, we want to give students a national platform for their work," Martin said. Students must submit a portfolio of short films by April 3.

Scott Beck, junior in communications at the University of Iowa, won the 2005 mtvU "Best Film on Campus." He was awarded a development deal with MTV and will begin work on a film with MTV Films shortly. Beck encouraged others to try and follow his path.

"These contests are great because they give students opportunities that would be hard to get otherwise," Beck said. "You can really get your foot in the door of a highly competitive industry."

This year's winner will receive a development deal guaranteeing funding for a short-form content film, as well as having their films exhibited to a massive audience online and on mtvU Uber, the network's broadband channel.

Anders Holine, freshman in art and design, won the ISU "Res Film Fest" this year and is considering entering the mtvU contest, said there are more benefits than just the prize package.

"It gives you confidence in your ability and makes you want to make more films," Holine said.

Beck agreed, saying it has been a huge boost to him and his work to know that other students respect what he is doing.

Senior executives from mtvU will announce five candidates around April 11. Once the contestants are narrowed down, the final winner is chosen online by student voters. The award will become a regular category for the MTV Movie Award show.

Holine and Beck agree that it is tough as a student to find the time and money to put together films, and winning a contest can help.

"[The contests] can help springboard your career, helping you to find budgets and money," Holine said.

MtvU has been making an effort to expose talented students across the nation with several contests, including best band, best comic and best animation. Martin said the purpose of the contests is to make mtvU a launching pad for student talent.

"We want to be an incubator, discovering talent and blowing it out on air through these contests," Martin said.

Although Iowa State currently isn't an affiliate of mtvU, ISU students can enter the "Student Filmmaker Award" contest, but may run into problems trying to participate in future contests.

"For this contest you don't have to be an mtvU affiliate, but for about 98 percent of our contests you do," said Jason Rzepka, manager of communications for mtvU.

Adding mtvU to a campus is free of charge and can open a large window of opportunities for a student body. Rzepka said anyone interested in bringing mtvU to the ISU campus should talk with the ISU administration and then contact mtvU.

Filmmaker Woods wins our Oscar challenge

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / March 12, 2006

No, Bryan Woods said, his knowledge of filmmaking gave him no inside track in picking all of the top six categories correctly in the Quad-City Times' Oscar contest.

"There weren't too many surprises this year," said Woods, a Bettendorf native and one-half of the award-winning duo Bluebox Limited. "The big surprise was 'Crash' for best picture, and I just picked that because I thought it was better than 'Brokeback (Mountain).' I thought it might pull off a surprise upset."

Indeed, it did. Woods, a junior at the University of Iowa, was one of five entrants who correctly picked the top six award winners correctly, and his name was picked at random to receive DVD copies of this year's five best picture nominees.

Woods will add "Brokeback Mountain," "Capote," "Crash," "Good Night, and Good Luck" and "Munich" to his video collection.

Also notching perfect scores were Tom Birkhofer and Kathy Fry, Bettendorf; Kathy Webster, Blue Grass, Iowa; and Jeff Meyers, Davenport.

Out of more than 400 entrants, 54 batted five-for-six — many of them predicting a "Brokeback Mountain" win for best picture.

The 21-year-old Woods said "subconsciously" his five-plus years of filmmaking may have come into play when making his picks.

"I look at what sort of films affect people the most, and 'Crash' had a lot to say," Woods said. "It's hard to walk down the street and not hear people talking about it."

The words "winning," "movie" and "contest" are not new for Woods. In December, he and partner Scott Beck won the "Best Film on Campus" competition, sponsored by MTVu, a college division of the cable channel. Beck's name was attached to the winning entry, "Her Summer," and Woods' name was connected to "University Heights," which also reached the top five, although both worked together on each project.

Chief among the prizes was a development deal with MTV Films. Woods said that about two weeks ago, he and Beck met with MTV Films execs, and delivered them six movie ideas, including one completed script, for new projects.

"Now, it's up to them to decide works best for them and for us," he said.

Aspiring filmmakers zoom in on Iowa

By Melissa Coulter / ART SCENE / February 2006

This isn't Bluebox Limited's first brush with fame. But it is the first time that filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods have been offered a development deal with a major studio. Following Beck's recent first-place finish in mtvU's "Best Trailer on Campus" competition, doors seem to be opening right and left for these talented Iowans.

Juniors at the University of Iowa, the two have been making films together for ten years now, which is nearly half of their lives. Beginning with stop-motion animation as Bettendorf sixth graders, the two continued to make short and feature films through high school and into college. Under the Bluebox Limited name, four feature films and several shorts have brought the rising stars attention and acclaim.

But it was Beck's "University Heights" that led the Bluebox boys on a path that culminates this month in a meeting with MTV film executives to pitch their latest screenplay, recently redubbed "Anniversary." (A trailer for Wood's film, "Her Summer," also finished in the top five.)

Woods and Beck have a tight bond that allows them to work together creatively. "We can try anything, but we're also able to tell each other if something sucks... You've got that immediate feedback system," Woods says of their rapport. Beck feels it's easier to formulate ideas as a tag team, helping each other through frustrating moments.

"But the worst thing is when we're both stuck," Beck says, which has happened a few times during the writing process for their latest project. Though authorship for previous screenplays was limited to one or the other, Woods and Beck are writing "Anniversary" as a team. "We both have an equal share in the creative process," Beck says. "Collaborating is opening up tons of different ideas, and it's really helping the process."

"All of our short films we've done 50/50—directed, written, produced— together, and those always turn out a little bit different than the features that we do on our own," Woods adds. "Our collaboration forms its own vision that we wouldn't have by ourselves."

The pair is determined to keep their vision broad. Upon entering the University of Iowa, they both opted to major in communications rather than film studies. They feel this opens them up to more experiences and viewpoints from which they can draw material for their screenplays. "I think communications has helped us just because it's a lot about observation," Woods says. In fact, the film "University Heights" stemmed from a philosophy class that Beck took.

Whether or not MTV decides to make "Anniversary," Beck and Woods are committed to their art and to succeeding together. "I imagine we'll definitely be making movies together for the rest of our lives," Woods says. Beck dreams of a day when both are successful enough to work on their own projects as well as on Bluebox films.

Even with this first taste of the big time, these young auteurs say they have no desire to run off to Hollywood after graduation.

“We’re really rooted in the community... We write stories about what we know, and we know Iowa. We know the community and we know the state, and we love making films here now,” said Beck. “We’d love in 10 years to have Bluebox Limited still working here out of the Quad Cities.”

'Pursuing a journey' brings filmmakers to campus

By Ashley Lewis / MORNINGSIDE COLLEGIAN REPORTER / January 26, 2006

The winners of mtvU's 2005 Best Film on Campus: Trailer Challenge Competition were on hand Wednesday night for a screening of their film "University Heights." The film's creators, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, are juniors at the University of Iowa.

The film examines the struggles of the everyday lives of four people on a college campus. They confront issues such as drugs, alcohol, violence, racism, and the loss of a loved one.

University Heights was selected the winner by Hollywood director John Singleton, director of "Boyz 'n the Hood," Catherine Hardwicke, director of "Thirteen," Nicole Kassell, director of "The Woodsman, and MTV staff, as well as online voters. Beck and Woods received a development deal with MTV and a home theater system as prizes.

"To have someone like John Singleton choose our movie is amazing," said Beck.

Beck and Woods have been writing, directing, and producing films for the past seven years. So far, they have produced 13 short films and four feature length films. University Heights was created with a budget of just 300 dollars and used all local actors.

"We are lucky to work with a lot of free talent," said Woods.

"It's also rewarding to watch the actors who have little to no experience," added Beck.

The directors said the hardest part of filming was that the movie took place on University grounds, and that the film was shot in 16 days. They faced difficulties working around schedules, sequences, different shots, and also holidays.

"We tried to shoot over Valentines Day," said Beck. "Nobody wanted to be there."

Ironically enough, even though both are communication majors, neither is a part of the film program at the college.

"We learn as we go," said Beck. "I can't balance in-school work and out-of-school work."

"There are certainly moments we are proud of and then things that didn't turn out," said Woods.

But their resumes continue to grow. They entered several films in the competition, and two trailers placed in the top five. They will be meeting with MTV executives in the next several weeks.

“We’d love for the MTV deal to pan out. It has already opened doors for us,” said Woods.

The event that brought the filmmakers to campus was a part of Morningside’s Entrepreneurship in the Arts Speaker Series.

“It’s awesome that our students can see what pursuing a journey looks like,” said Faculty Sponsor Pam Mickelson.

Filmmaker strives to keep people real, stay in Iowa

By Nicole Riehl / CEDAR RAPIDS GAZETTE / December 24, 2005

Nicole Riehl: This month, you and filmmaking partner Scott Beck won MTVu's Best Film on Campus: Trailer Competition for your film "University Heights." Your prize is a production deal with MTV Films. What movie will you make?

Bryan Woods: It'll probably be a script we've been working on for the past year, called "Coast." It's about a young married couple who are at the end of their relationship. They're dealing with that, and they get tied up into this world of a father trying to save his dying son.

NR: How'd you get started?

BW: It started in elementary school, borrowing friends' video cameras. We dressed in Batman clothes and made our own Batman movie. It was pretty lame. In sixth grade, I met Scott, and in high school, we started taking movie-making a little more seriously.

NR: What are your plots like?

BW: Our films are usually geared toward drama and suspense, but we always try to have comedy within those movies. The common theme is that they're all about people. We want to tell stories about real people.

NR: What sort of budgets have you been operating under, and how do you keep production costs low?

BW: We've been working on super low budgets, like \$300. That's possible because of technology - we shoot on digital video instead of film - and because we found so many great actors in the state who are willing to work for free because they love to act.

NR: Where do you get ideas?

BW: Anywhere. Walking down a street, in a classroom, eavesdropping on a conversation.

NR: What strengths do each you and Scott have?

BW: We're almost on the exact same page. I'd say the only difference is in the writing process. Scott's more theme-oriented, trying to make sure the story's on track in terms of what it's trying to say, and I'm more audience-driven. I'm always trying to think, "Is this entertaining enough?"

NR: What filmmaking skills have you learned in school, and what's self-taught?

BW: We basically taught ourselves the technical aspects of filmmaking: camera, editing, lighting. What we've learned (in college) is how to observe people, how they interact. Those skills are extremely helpful in directing because you want to portray realistic people. A lot of learning can be done through DVDs - the special features on making of documentaries.

NR: Iowa is no filmmaking hub, but you two want to stick around. Why?

BW: The plan is to make it a state that film works in. Whether we have to move to L.A. for a couple of years to make a name for ourselves, the long-term goal is to keep making movies here and give back to the state that embraced our dreams.

Profile

- Name: Bryan Woods

- Age: 21

- Occupation: Co-founder of Bluebox Limited film production company; director, writer and producer of 13 shorts and four feature-length films

- Hometown: Bettendorf

- Education: Bettendorf High School, 2003; Scott Community College, 2005; University of Iowa junior in communication studies

- Family: Parents Dennis and Lynn Woods of Bettendorf, three brothers and one sister

Contest nets Bluebox filmmakers new laurels, development deal

By Jeff Ignatius / RIVER CITIES' READER / December 21, 2005

Technically, Scott Beck won mtvU's "Best Film on Campus" contest earlier this month. You'd just never know it from talking to him.

Beck's trailer for his feature film *University Heights* won the competition – he wrote and directed the movie – but he never claims the project exclusively as his. In discussing his contest victory, he assigns plenty of credit to Bryan Woods, his partner in Bluebox Limited and an accomplished filmmaker in his own right. "It's important for us to be recognized as a pair," Beck said last week. The duo, who live in the Quad Cities and attend the University of Iowa, has been making movies together for five years.

Woods had his own trailer in the competition, for his feature film *Her Summer*. It was also among five finalists. Last year, Woods' and Beck's short film was a finalist in Best Film on Campus, which is meant to reward student movie-making talent. The duo was also a directing finalist in the 2004 Project Greenlight contest.

There's no money attached to the mtvU contest win. Beck won a home-theatre system, but the real prize is a development deal with MTV Films. And that's what he and Woods have had their eye on since last year. "It was the development deal that was the big deal," Beck said.

For Bluebox Limited's four feature projects, Beck and Woods established a strict division of labor: One person writes and directs, while the other produces. They've worked more collaboratively on their short films. (See "Bluebox Filmmakers Take the Unorthodox Road to Education, Partnership," *River Cities' Reader Issue 504*, November 24, 2004.)

But for the past year, they've been working together on the screenplay for *Coast*, in which "a rocky marriage is tested when a young couple is embroiled into the dangerous world of a father desperate to save his dying son," according to the Bluebox Web site. The process of writing together has worked, Beck said, because "we're able to bounce ideas off each other really well."

This script was the one they were hoping to pitch to MTV Films if they won the Best Film on Campus contest. Beck said the screenplay is about three-quarters finished, and the Bluebox filmmakers have sent it out for feedback.

The pair has certainly been dreaming. About a month ago, Beck said, they started compiling a casting wish list, with the names and numbers of agents, "just in case something big happened." Beck said that an ideal budget for *Coast* would be roughly \$6 million. "We'd like to make this film with a studio backing," he said.

A development deal is no guarantee that a film will get made, however. More than anything, it gives the filmmakers access to the decision-makers at MTV Films.

The Best Film on Campus contest this year – with its requirement for a trailer rather than a stand-alone short film – seemed designed to segue directly into a development deal. The idea, Beck said, was that the winner would have the opportunity to make a feature film based on his or her entry. But *University Heights* is already a feature film, and Beck has little interest in re-making it for MTV Films. “We don’t want to tread the same water,” he said.

The trailer format made it easy for Beck to enter the contest. Woods re-cut his trailer for *Her Summer* – to downplay the mystery element of the movie and emphasize friendship – but Beck didn’t make significant alterations for his *University Heights* entry.

Although Beck and Woods are experienced filmmakers, they’re still novices when it comes to the nuts and bolts of Hollywood. Beck is blunt that he doesn’t have a full sense of what the development-deal entails, and if there’s any money involved down the road. “If they don’t like the script, I don’t know if they can back out of the development deal,” he said. On the issue of money, he said: “We have no idea about that.”

Beck said that he expects to have a meeting with MTV Films in January, and he’s been encouraged by the contact he’s had with the company. “I feel really good about it,” he said. He and Woods are also generating a backup list of script concepts, in the event that MTV Films passes on *Coast*.

Beck concedes that the seriousness of *Coast* doesn’t seem to jibe with the MTV Films output, which has mostly focused on bawdy, juvenile comedies such as *Pootie Tang*, *Orange County*, and *Jackass: The Movie*, along with music-star vehicles such as *Crossroads* and *Get Rich or Die Tryin’*. But the studio has done dramatic fare such as *Coach Carter*, and Beck is quick to note that MTV Films also released the scabrous cult classic *Election*. “It seems as though they’re broadening their horizons,” he said.

Beck also said that the contest win has opened doors for the Bluebox pair, regardless of what happens with MTV Films. Beck’s win was noted in *Variety* last week, for instance.

Beck said he’s optimistic about the relationship with MTV Films while also trying to temper his expectations. “I’m expecting the best, but I’m trying to remain level-headed,” he said.

Of course, even if MTV Films doesn’t pick up *Coast* or some other Bluebox Limited project, Beck has that home-theatre system to console him.

Or ... perhaps not.

Beck said he and Woods don’t need a system that nice – it includes a plasma television with a 42-inch screen and a \$450 stereo system – at this point in their lives. “We’re trying to find somebody to buy it,” Beck said. In typical fashion, they want to put the proceeds back into their filmmaking.

Student cues MTV pic deal

By Chris Gardner / VARIETY / December 14, 2005

College student Scott Beck has inked a development deal with MTV Films. Pact is a prize Beck won when a trailer he directed, titled "University Heights," was picked as the winner of mtvU's "Best Film on Campus" contest.

Judges for the competitish were helmers Catherine Hardwicke, Nicole Kassell and John Singleton. They -- along with MTV Films execs and mtvU.com online voters -- chose Beck's trailer from a rash of submissions, and he will now work with MTV execs to develop his idea for the pic into a full-length feature.

Beck, a junior at the U. of Iowa, came up with a concept that follows the last days of four lives on a college campus. Beck was joined in the finalist round by another UI student, Bryan Woods.

Ah, we knew them when

Editorial / MOLINE DISPATCH & ROCK ISLAND ARGUS / December 11, 2005

No, we're not exactly Hollywood Midwest ... but in recent years some moviemakers in these parts have enjoyed some rather nice success. Take those Italian Avati brothers, for example. Or Max Collins of "Road to Perdition" fame. And we can lay claim to actress Lara Flynn Boyle, to name a few of our homegrown cinema heroes.

Now a pair of Bettendorf residents appear to be on the brink of turning their story-telling talents into a film career.

Maybe someday folks in these parts can say that they knew Scott Beck and Bryan Woods when. Last week mtvU, an MTV spin-off that broadcasts exclusively to college campuses, named them the winners of their Best Film on Campus contest.

Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods have made 13 short and feature-length films together during a friendship which stretches back to the sixth grade. To win the contest, they submitted two-minute trailers of movies they want to create. Both were finalists. Last week, they learned from an MTV rep that they won the grand prize, which includes a deal for their joint production company, Bluebox Limited, to develop a film with successful MTV Films. "This award, it tells us that we're on the right track and gives us an enormous boost into the film industry, which itself is very hard to get into," Mr. Beck said. "So, this definitely propels us in the right direction and is a dream come true."

It no doubt makes the reward even sweeter that judges for the winning trailer for "University Heights" included well-known and talented Hollywood directors John Singleton (Boyz n the Hood), Catherine Hardwicke (Thirteen) Nicole Kassell (The Woodsman).

To see the trailers, visit www.blueboxlimited.com or watch on mtvU channels, if you can. But don't worry. It looks like, even if you can't see them now, you'll be sampling their work down the line and saying, "We knew them when."

Bettendorf native wins film award from MTV

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / December 7, 2005

Scott Beck thought he was in on the surprise.

The Bettendorf natives had entered the mtvU "Best Film on Campus" contest and each was in the top five.

"It was an incredible setup," said Beck, a junior majoring in communication studies. "Here I was going along with the surprise, thinking I was in on it. Then the tables completely turned."

An mtvU video jockey and a party were on the other side of the door, informing Beck he was the winner of the contest instead.

"It took me like 10 seconds" to realize he was indeed the winner, Beck said. He watched himself on a local newscast Monday night and "the look on my face was ridiculous," he added.

In the second annual contest, college student filmmakers from around the country were to enter "trailers" worthy of "coming attractions" showings at a theater. Beck entered the Bluebox film "University Heights" and Woods entered "Her Summer." Although Beck stressed that the two work as partners, each took the lead in developing the trailer for their respective movie.

In "University Heights," which was released in 2004, four characters' lives intertwine on a college campus.

Voting for the movies took place online, with judging also by Hollywood directors John Singleton ("Boyz N the Hood"), Catherine Hardwicke ("Thirteen") and Nicole Kassell ("The Woodsman").

"The judges felt that Scott Beck's trailer for 'University Heights' did a great job of drawing the viewer in and capturing his or her interest," mtvU spokesman Jason Rzepka said. "The characters were intriguing and the trailer really made you wonder how the different strands of the story would develop. Of the trailers in the finalist round, 'University Heights' was the movie they most wanted to watch themselves."

Beck receives a home entertainment system and a development deal with MTV Films. Beck said he was unsure whether "University Heights," "Her Summer" or "Coast," the script the two are finishing, will be the film he and Woods advance.

"We definitely have a bunch of ideas we want to bring them if they want to consider those also," he said.

The award is the latest for the duo of Bettendorf natives, who were in the top five for the same contest last year. They also were considered for “Project Greenlight,” a Matt Damon-Ben Affleck reality series for fledgling filmmakers.

But this is the biggest honor for Beck, Woods and Bluebox so far.

“It really hasn’t sunken in yet, but we’re going to take this opportunity and run with it as best we can,” Beck said. “A lot of people are trying to get their foot in the door in Hollywood, and Bryan and I are almost blown away because we were almost handed this opportunity — almost too easily.”

Dream come true: Student filmmaking duo wins mtvU contest

By Darla M. Wiese / MOLINE DISPATCH / December 7, 2005

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods' interest in story-telling paid off big this week when mtvU, an MTV spin-off that broadcasts exclusively to college campuses, named the duo winners of their "Best Film on Campus" contest.

"We used to write short stories and novels, and eventually that evolved into filmmaking," said Mr. Beck, 21, a junior at the University of Iowa.

Friends since the sixth grade, the Bettendorf natives formed their own production company, Bluebox Limited, in 2001. Together, they have produced 13 short and four feature-length films.

For the contest, each submitted two-minute trailers of movies they hope to create.

Mr. Woods' "Her Summer," is based on a real murder mystery and was created on a \$50 budget. Mr. Beck's "University Heights," follows the last days of four lives on a college campus and was created on a heftier \$300 budget.

Both trailers have won numerous awards in the past, so Mr. Woods and Mr. Beck were hopeful.

They learned in early November that both their movies made the top five finalists.

"They always work together," Linda Beck, Scott's mother, said. "They don't get mad at each other ... (Scott's) excited whether either one of them wins. That's how close they are."

Last Thursday, mtvU producers called Mr. Beck to say his partner's "Her Summer" won grand prize and asked for his help to surprise Mr. Woods.

What Mr. Beck didn't know was that his "University Heights" was grand prize winner and Mr. Woods was in on everything.

"It's kind of comical in retrospect because over the weekend we both said things like 'Oh, I wonder if we won,'" Mr. Beck said.

"How they kept a secret from each other, I don't know," Ms. Beck said.

Tuesday, MTV producers flew to Iowa City and arranged an interview with Mr. Beck before setting off to Mr. Woods' dorm room to "surprise" him with the good news.

"When I got there, I was greeted by like four camera crews, friends, half our cast, and family," said Mr. Beck, who was surprised to learn his film actually had won.

Both Mr. Woods and Mr. Beck came out winners because the grand prize, a deal to develop a film with MTV Films, is being awarded to their production company, Bluebox Limited.

"This award, it tells us that we're on the right track and gives us an enormous boost into the film industry, which itself is very hard to get into," Mr. Beck said. "So, this definitely propels us in the right direction and is a dream come true."

"University Heights" was chosen for the grand prize by Hollywood directors John Singleton (Boyz n the Hood), Catherine Hardwicke (Thirteen) Nicole Kassell (The Woodsman) and online voters.

Both trailers can be seen at www.blueboxlimited.com, and, beginning next week, on mtvU channels. Visit www.mtvu.com for details.

UI student wins film contest

By Gregg Hennigan / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / December 6, 2005

Ashton Kutcher wasn't there, but Iowa, MTV and the world of film converged for a "Punk'd"-like prank Monday night in Iowa City.

University of Iowa student Scott Beck thought he was surprising his friend Bryan Woods by going to Woods' apartment and telling him he'd won mtvU's "Best Film on Cam-pus" contest. Instead, when Beck showed up, he was told he was, in fact, the winner.

"This is absurd," Beck, a 21-year-old junior in communications, said when he opened the apartment door and was greeted with a "surprise" by about a dozen friends and cast and crew from his movie.

Beck and Woods submitted films for the contest and were among five finalists. Beck won for his film titled "University Heights."

The contest asked college filmmakers to submit movie trailers no longer than two minutes illustrating a full-length feature they would like to make one day.

As the winner, Beck won a development deal with MTV Films and a home entertainment center. There's no guarantee that a movie will be made, but Beck now will be asked to develop a feature-length script.

"It's my dream come true," he said. "It really is."

Beck said he and Woods have been working on a longer script for "University Heights" for months and they would be writing a lot after the school semester is over. Beck described the movie as a mystery about the last days on a college campus of four people whose lives intertwine.

Stephen Friedman, general manager of mtvU, said "University Heights" was chosen over dozens of other entries because the characters were developed and it did the best job of pulling viewers in.

"I think people were curious about what were the different strands that they saw in the film and where would they lead," he said. "And that's always the key to a great trailer."

Beck and Woods worked closely on each other's movies and Woods, also a 21-year-old junior in communications, said it felt like a win for him, too.

Collaboration is nothing new for the two Bettendorf natives. They've made four feature-length films and about 15 short films together since the seventh grade. They've entered films into several competitions and were finalists last year for the inaugural mtvU contest.

It's a writing/directing/producing partnership they hope to take to Hollywood after they graduate.

"That's our dream, to be able to make movies," Woods said.

UI junior wins MTV film award

By Margaret Poe / THE DAILY IOWAN / December 6, 2005

With a gregarious mtvU veejay thrusting a microphone in his face and a gaggle of extras from his latest film besieging him, the lanky UI junior could only manage a repeated "wow" as he stood frozen in the doorway, his jaw dropping toward the carpet.

As the outpouring subsided, astounded filmmaker Scott Beck realized he had just secured a development deal with MTV Films - a prize he thought his friend and fellow film guru Bryan Woods had snagged.

"It's just like MTV to punk the punker," said Beck, who had been duped by the college-focused television network into believing childhood pal Woods had secured the award. But Beck, on his way to give Woods the good news, suddenly found himself the center of attention.

Walking into an apartment bursting with yellow and black balloons and streamers was his last expectation Monday night.

Beck's trailer for his film *University Heights* - which follows the intertwining lives of four Iowa college students - snagged the mtvU Best Film on Campus prize after online voting elevated Beck from finalist status, which he also garnered last year.

mtvU veejay Gardner Loulan hosted the surprise gathering, which will later air on the TV network, simultaneously shushing and inducing the crowd into a fervor of excitement.

"It's either a family of raccoons in the hallway, or it's Scott," said the charismatic Loulan, as he guided the crowd through many close calls. His blond wavy hair and black hooded sweatshirt gave him the appearance of any college student, but, with his mtvU-emblazoned microphone, he commanded the authority of the shocked filmmaker.

Bettendorf natives Woods and Beck collaborated on both of their films, continuing a professional partnership that began in the sixth grade, when action figures served as their actors. The lifelong pals agreed they are willing to suspend their studies - both communication-studies majors- to rewrite and improve the award-winning movie.

"Filmmaking is a dream," Woods said, looking across his living room - its white walls plastered with M.N. Shyamalan posters - at fellow film junkies chugging Mountain Dew and reveling in the success of the "no-budget" movie. A piece of cheddar cheese whizzing over his head paused his response only a second; the level-minded director seemed accustomed to his friends' antics.

The Ben Affleck/Matt Damon-esque pair hope to own a big production company someday, but the glitz of Hollywood is not their aspiration - they want to retain their Iowa roots, basing their company in their home state.

"We grew up here," Woods said. "It's a state we love. The stories we write are, one way or the other, about this state."

Beck hopes Iowa's cinema scene will explode in the coming years.

"People in California think all there is is corn or potatoes here," he said. But some Californians - mtvU officials - have taken notice of the landlocked state's untapped talent.

Ross Martin, mtvU's vice president of programming, said the most significant innovation, trend-setting, and rule-breaking occurs on college campuses, and the UI is no exception.

"I think it says a lot about the school," the executive said, lauding Beck's and Woods' achievements.

All those gathered exuded pride and excitement for the ambitious filmmakers. Josh Guffey, a UI senior who acted as a classroom extra in University Heights, said the pair had finally gotten their due.

"These guys are living the dream," he said.

Two University of Iowa students are well on their way to the Mecca of motion pictures

By Meghan Hackett / VUE365 / December 2, 2005

The Hollywood film scene often brings two phrases to mind: altered egos and glitz.

Two University of Iowa students are well on their way to the Mecca of motion pictures; however, their down-to-earth qualities combined with their appreciation for their Iowa roots are sure to break stereotypes.

Both Scott Beck and Bryan Woods grew up in Bettendorf, Iowa, and what started as an interest for storytelling grew to a passion for film and in high school the two developed a production house called Bluebox Limited.

The two filmmakers' original style and ability to weave a multitude of emotion through their films caught the eye of MTVu in their 2005 "Best Film on Campus: Trailer Challenge" competition. The premise of this contest is easy: develop a two-minute advertisement for your film. The actuality is much more complex: tell a story within two minutes that doesn't give away the entire film, yet builds a climax and maintains a level of suspense.

"Sometimes it's easier to make a feature film, rather than a trailer," said Beck.

Beck and Woods' trailers "University Heights" and "Her Summer" placed in the top 10, and a phone call on November 1 placed both of their entries in the final five.

"We're lucky to come this far, and now we need all the support we can get," said Beck. The winner will be announced on December 12, after the conglomeration of Hollywood directors, MTV staff, and a week long online voting on MTVu.com.

Awarded to the winner is a development deal with MTV Films and a home theatre system. "We only do competitions if there's a prize that can further our film career," said Beck, noting that the home theatre system wasn't their main motivation.

Having placed in the top three in the 2004 "MTVu's Best Film on Campus Competition," Beck and Woods aren't discouraged by not winning. "All we can do is do the best we can by putting the project out there," said Beck. "It's really cool to get a second chance," said Woods. "We're just crossing our fingers and hoping for the best."

While they might not have won last year, the exposure generated great press, built relationships with members of the Iowa Film Community, and screened a few of their latest films at festivals across the country. Beck and Woods also placed in the Top 50 Director's competition in the Project Greenlight contest, a production house created by Ben Affleck and Matt Damon.

No matter what happens on December 12, these two guys are determined to take their try in California. However, Beck plans to not sell out to the Hollywood business of big money. The two would like to remain true to independent minded films with the capacity of working in a studio, similar to director Alexander Payne (Sideways, Election) to whom they consider a great influence.

“If we’re lucky enough to make big budget films, we’d like to bring them back to Iowa,” said Beck. “The Iowa film community is a tight knit community, and we hope people will see what they have to offer.”

Bettendorf filmmakers are up for MTV award

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / November 17, 2005

For the second year in a row, Bluebox Limited is up for top honors in a student film contest sponsored by MTV.

mtvU is a college-based spinoff of the popular cable TV channel, reaching 6.5 million students on 730 campuses nationwide.

The two were semifinalists last year as well, reaching the top three.

Two of Bluebox's entries — "Her Summer" and "University Heights" — are among the 10 up for honors this year. While last year's competition was for short films, this year it's for trailers, or coming attractions-type commercials, for movies.

"We cut trailers from those feature films," Beck said. "The competition is, basically, that you make the trailer and, if you win, MTV will produce the film. If we win, we get the option to produce a feature film of what we have produced on a much larger scale. We can sort of go back and redo it, in a sense."

Votes can be placed online at www.mtvu.com/contests/best_film_on_campus/2005/ through Nov. 8. The winners get a home theater system and — more importantly for the pair of 21-year-old filmmakers — a development deal.

The winner will be announced in mid-December.

"We were really fortunate to get in the semifinals, and surprised by it," Beck said. "We hope we can use this opportunity to launch onto something bigger."

The two are working on the screenplay for their next movie, titled "Coast."

"Her Summer," released last year, won Woods an award for best screenplay and won Bluebox an award for best student film.

Two UI students finalists in mtvU film contest

IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / November 16, 2005

Two University of Iowa students are among the five finalists in a national film competition sponsored by mtvU, the MTV-owned network strictly for college students.

The second annual Best Film on Campus contest asks college students to film two-minute movie trailers to illustrate a vision for a full-length feature film they wish to make. The grand prize is a feature film development deal with MTV Films to turn the vision into a full-fledged motion picture.

Two UI students, Bryan Woods and Scott Beck, each have a trailer among the five finalists. Woods' concept is a crime caper called "Her Summer." Here's how mtvU describes it:

"In 1999, Officer Ethan Crowe discovers two of his brothers brutally murdered. Determined to solve the case himself, Ethan stays on the crime scene all night — ending in a horrifying discovery. Based on a true story, 'Her Summer' is a compilation of the events which took place that night, unraveled by two friends who come across the investigation material."

Beck's concept is called "University Heights," and no, it has nothing to do with pesky cops who like to sit in speed traps ticketing college students. Here's what mtvU has to say:

"'University Heights' follows the last days of four lives on a college campus. An examination of life and the choices we make, 'University Heights' grasps the common struggle of humanity — finding yourself."

The other finalists, from a release from mtvU:

- Charlie Anness, University of Cincinnati — "Grading Curves" — Two college guys, Shawn and Drake, start a scholarship fund for hot chicks. A wealthy alum agrees to hook them up with the money, but only if Shawn hooks up with the five hottest girls on campus. But no one said it was going to be easy ... especially when love comes to town."
- Charles Son, Ohio University — "Student of the Month" — "Student of the Month" is the story of a depressed high school acting teacher, Mr. Schwartz, who finds inspiration in a talented, but troubled, student named Steve Falcone, who is ruled under the iron fist of his gangster older brother Jimmy. Inspiration soon develops into infatuation as Mr. Schwartz grows closer to Steve. When Mr. Schwartz shows up at a party at his young student's home and runs into the thespian-hating Jimmy, Steve will eventually discover what it truly means to be the teacher's pet.

- Derek Green, University of Colorado at Boulder — “Violet Flower” — A troubled nomad finds himself in a familiar town where he begins picking up the pieces of his life to figure out what went wrong.

The winner will be determined by a fan vote. Users can view and vote at http://www.mtvu.com/contests/best_film_on_campus/2005/

Three celebrity judges — John Singleton, Nicole Kassell, and Catherine Hardwicke — will also assist in deciding the winner.

mtvU broadcasts to more than 730 college campuses nationwide. It is owned by Viacom, which also owns MTV, MTV2, VH-1, Nickelodeon/Nick at Nite, TV Land, SpikeTV, CMT and others.

MTV Films has produced such notable films as "Beavis and Butt-Head Do America" and "Jackass: The Movie."

I want my MTV development deal

By FilmStew Staff / FILMSTEW.com / November 15, 2005

Don't you wish sometimes that they would make the trailer first, before the feature-length film, to confirm something is actually worth making?

In a way, that's exactly the impetus behind mtvU's 2nd annual Best Film on Campus competition. The 24/7 closed circuit college network - which spans upwards of 730 campuses across the U.S. and a combined student body of 6.8 million spring break worshippers - has whittled it down to five finalists. And along with a home entertainment system, the winner will get to flesh out their trailer vision into a full-length production for MTV Films. In other words, Project FratLight, although they also have separate Best Gamer, Best Music and Best Animation competitions.

At this final stage, we thought we'd help out potential online voters, as well as the competition's three celebrity judges (John Singleton, Nicole Kassell and Catherine Hardwicke), by attaching a brief Hollywood label to each one of the eligible projects. Just to help visualize their full, crass, commercial potential.

- Rob Schneider Comedy, a.k.a. Grading Curves: Two college guys, Shawn and Drake, start a scholarship fund for hot chicks. A wealthy alum agrees to hook them up with the money, but only if Shawn hooks up with the five hottest girls on campus. [Charlie Anness, University of Cincinnati]

- Kurt Russell Cop Drama, a.k.a. Her Summer: In 1999, Officer Ethan Crowe discovers two of his brothers brutally murdered. Determined to solve the case himself, Ethan stays on the crime scene all night, ending in a horrifying discovery. Based on a true story, Her Summer is a compilation of the events which took place that night, unraveled by two friends who come across the investigation material. [Bryan Woods, University of Iowa]

- Son of Brokeback Mountain, a.k.a. Student of the Month: The story of a depressed high school acting teacher, Mr. Schwartz, who finds inspiration in a talented, but troubled, student named Steve Falcone, who is ruled under the iron fist of his gangster older brother Jimmy. Inspiration soon develops into infatuation as Mr. Schwartz grows closer to Steve. When Mr. Schwartz shows up at a party at his young student's home and runs into the thespian-hating Jimmy, Steve will eventually discover what it truly means to be the teacher's pet. [Charles Son, Ohio University]

- The WB 2006 Group Hiatus Project, a.k.a. University Heights: Follows the last days of four lives on a college campus. An examination of life and the choices we make, University Heights grasps the common struggle of humanity -- finding yourself. [Scott Beck, University of Iowa]

- One Hell of a Tough Sell, a.k.a. Violet Flower: A troubled nomad finds himself in a familiar town where he begins picking up the pieces of his life to figure out what went wrong. [Derek Green, University of Colorado at Boulder]

Classic cinema lives in remakes, nostalgia

By Jill Blackledge / IOWA STATE DAILY / November 9, 2005

Many films are returning to a more classic form. A form that includes Hollywood icons such as "Gone With the Wind," "Casablanca" or "Breakfast at Tiffany's." And, in addition to a move toward independent films, Hollywood is taking a step back to its former days. Recent notable Hollywood remakes include "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "War of the Worlds" and the upcoming "King Kong."

"First of all, though, it depends on how audiences define what is 'classic,'" says Stu Pollard of Lunacy Productions, based in Los Angeles.

"Someone who's from my generation, 40 years old, will define it differently than a 20-year-old," he says. "The simplest definition is something that just holds up over time, with 'Casablanca' being the ultimate example."

Pollard says Hollywood returns to classic cinema because it knows it will work.

"The driving force in Hollywood is money, and people are always going to be looking for ways to make money or rely on ways they know they can make money," he says.

Scott Beck of Bluebox Limited in Iowa City says he agrees.

"The Hollywood style, or 'studio' film, is always going to be around - it is a profitable enterprise for the studios," Beck says. "Studios make movies to make a profit, whereas many independent films have no guarantee to make a profit."

Joe Boyle, owner of Lemonus Productions in Davenport, says classic Hollywood is about nostalgia.

"The reason that these older films can be successfully remade is because they are remembered and thought of fondly," he says. "The classic films of the past last simply because of their longevity and their ingrainedness in our culture."

Bryan Woods, also of Bluebox Limited, says, on the other hand, remakes are popular because of a lack of original ideas. He says the industry forces the lack of originality because screenwriters already have to be part of the system in order to have their work read.

"Hollywood is such a hard system to crack," he says. "There are all these great artists just waiting to get their foot in the door with America's next great story, but their access is denied."

New generations also equal new audiences, Beck says. He says he thinks that is why new movies such as "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" work, since the newer film isn't all that different from the original.

Woods says that, in addition, Hollywood uses remakes to play it safe in the industry. In theory, if a film worked in the past, it should work now.

Boyle says that is not always the case, however.

"This attitude can sometimes pay off, but many times the remakes do not have the same vision, quality direction, actors, etc. and can come off dull where the original film shined," he says.

Pollard, however, also says remakes of older movies and TV shows are produced because studios know they will appeal to the largest theater-going population - young people - which changes the style of films.

"Movies are made for young people," he says. "It's a franchise with a built-in audience, and the way they're going to make it new and fresh is to put current stars in it."

Beck says studios package a product based on a target demographic, which is why many action movies are released during the summer, for example, when students are out of school.

Rather than being concerned with numbers, Woods says studios should worry more about plot.

"Bottom line is cinema is still young, barely 100 years old. There is absolutely no reason why movies should be repeating themselves," he says. "Hollywood needs to worry less about statistics and more about the depth and quality of a story."

Although newer movies may use the classic Hollywood style, they still need to have some fresh elements for them to stand out against the original.

"There's that saying that there are only about 15 stories in the world, and every story is a spin-off of those," Beck says. "However, you can still take old elements and make them new. Freshness comes in execution."

With perhaps only a few minor changes to style, Boyle says he thinks classic Hollywood films will always remain prevalent in society.

"The reason is there are two main types of audiences - ones that like to think about the quality of a film, the subtext, characterization, plot, etc. and ones that like to see expensive action films with lots of explosions and violence, cheesy dialogue and Vin Diesel," he says. "Hollywood will always cater to these moviegoers."

2 from UI make MTVu semis

By Amanda Masker / THE DAILY IOWAN / November 1, 2005

A set of UI filmmakers have qualified for the semifinals in an mtvU film contest for the second year in a row.

When mtvU called out to universities across the nation offering development deals and home-entertainment systems to the entrant with the best film trailer, UI juniors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods answered. They recently learned they became semifinalists in the Best Film on Campus: Trailer Challenge Contest.

Both men created trailers to films they had previously made together via Bluebox Limited, the production company they created in high school, in hopes that by winning the contest, they could re-create the selected film on a larger budget with bigger named actors.

Beck entered a drama he wrote and directed titled University Heights, a character piece about four lives on a college campus and the conflicts they endure.

Woods entered Her Summer, a thriller he wrote and directed, in which two friends delve through a box of evidence from a murder case and speculate what happened. The trailer reveals "An unsolved case. A box of evidence. One unforgettable story."

While the duo isn't hoping for one trailer over the other, Beck speculated that " Her Summer probably applies more to the MTV audience." But both films have their merits, he added.

Both Beck and Woods are communication studies majors with a passion for telling stories.

Last year, the duo's collaborative short film finished in the top three of the Best Film on Campus contest. However, contests are not a main focus of the filmmaking team, Woods said.

"We don't really do this often. We have entered about four contests," he said, adding they gauge contests by the prizes that will further their filmmaking careers.

Being semifinalists is really exciting for the duo, because a lot of people don't think of Iowa as a state of film, Woods said, adding, "We live in a state where filmmaking is exciting."

The UI is the only university to have two semifinalists in the competition.

"It says a lot about Iowa, as a state with filmmaking," Woods said.

Your vote could help local filmmakers achieve their dream

By Sean Leary / MOLINE DISPATCH / October 28, 2005

It was a beautiful fall day, only a few years ago. I could've been outside doing any number of productive, entertaining things, but instead, I was sitting in a near-empty schoolroom and watching countless films over and over as a judge for the Iowa Motion Picture Awards.

Many of the movies -- even those in the professional category -- were fairly painful. Some films that had pristine lighting, sound and technical aspects had sloppy, hackneyed or ultra-pretentious scripts. Movies with some imagination and creativity were hamstrung by low-budget sets or effects or amateurish techniques.

The eventual winners, and those that challenged them for trophy spots, stood out in high relief from the rest.

Among those that took honors, there were a few that immediately struck me like the proverbial lightning bolt.

These films had their flaws, but you could see them easily being corrected with time and experience. What was more impressive was the imagination, reach, skill and obvious talent displayed by the filmmakers.

This was my first experience with Bluebox Limited.

What I quickly found out was that these films were made by a couple of Bettendorf teens still in high school -- Bryan Woods and Scott Beck. That impressed me all the more. So much so that I wrote a column about them, and eventually collaborated with them on three film projects I wrote and produced.

What has struck me about the two as I have spoken with them, worked with them and hung out with them is how devoted they are to their craft. These guys aren't getting into movies primarily to get dates, get attention or get fame. They have a passion for what they're doing that completely consumes them. They could do nothing else.

That's what makes witnessing their success all the more satisfying. These guys deserve it.

This week, they got word that for the second consecutive year, they are among the top 10 finalists in a national, MTV-sponsored film contest. Bluebox's two-minute teasers for the flicks "University Heights" and "Her Summer" have reached the money round in MTV's Best Film on Campus: Trailer Challenge Competition.

Keep in mind that this comes after a year in which Woods and Beck won eight Iowa Motion Picture Awards and were finalists in a little contest called Project Greenlight, which was run by Ben Affleck and Matt Damon.

Finalists will be chosen in another round of online voting (MTV staffers and/or celebrity judges also will cast votes). Trailers will be available online for voting through Nov. 8 at www.mtvu.com/contests/best_film_on_campus/2005/.

The winner will be announced Dec. 12. The first-place finisher will receive a home-theater system and a development deal with MTV Films. True to form, the Bluebox guys are far more excited about the latter than the former.

"What Bryan and I really care about is the development deal," Beck said. "It'd be nice to get a foot in the door and have a major studio back our next project."

That next project is an ambitious script called "Coast" that they've been working on for the past year, with a targeted budget far beyond the few hundred dollars allocated for most of their films.

The MTV deal would go a long way toward getting them that budget. That's why they're crossing their fingers for a win.

"We're lucky to come this far, and now we need all the support we can get," Beck said.

So why not help them out? Log on and give them your vote. You could make a real difference in the lives of two talented creators in your own back yard. Not a bad way to spend a few minutes on a beautiful fall day.

UI students' films picked by MTV

By Brian Morelli / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / October 28, 2005

Filmmaking duo and University of Iowa juniors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods have advanced to the semifinal round in a nationwide MTV film contest with two movie trailers.

The music television network announced that "Her Summer" and "University Heights" were two of 10 trailers to reach the semifinals in mtvU's Best Film on Campus: Trailer Challenge Competition.

The 21-year-old Bettendorf natives have collaborated on films as writers, directors and producers since seventh grade. Creating 13 short films and four feature films together, Beck and Woods have won or placed movies in several competitions, including "Shades," which finished in the top three in last year's inaugural mtvU contest.

"There's tough (competition) up there. There are some guys in California with a much bigger budget," said Beck, whose budget was less than \$300. "But we are pretty confident in how ours stack up. We try to tell a story with the trailer; some of the others were a little vague."

Woods also liked their chances against the other films.

"We offer something different," he said. "'University Heights' offers an ensemble cast. It is a character piece. 'Her Summer' is a horror-suspense film."

The winner will receive a film development deal with MTV studios.

"We are excited. We really hope to get a film deal with MTV. It would be a way for two kids from Iowa to break into the film industry, since it's so tough," Woods said.

Five trailers will advance to the finals, and the winner will be announced Dec. 12. Celebrity judges, including John Singleton, also will help with the selection.

"These are two fantastic young filmmakers with a bright future. How could I not want to see these films?" Ross Martin, vice president of programming for mtvU, said Thursday from his office in New York.

"I wish I could have been there on the set and seen them in action," he said.

Martin said they are looking to develop college student filmmakers across the country.

"This competition is an opportunity to showcase some of the edgier, new ideas coming from college students," Martin said.

Tom Wheeler is the manager of the Iowa Film Office, which facilitates filmmaking in Iowa. Wheeler has worked with Beck and Woods in broadening their actor base, finding locations and creating a business plan.

"Their filmmaking abilities are readily visible to any viewer, and they are steadily increasing their skills from project to project. They write compelling stories," Wheeler said.

Local film festival offers independent, student filmmakers a chance to grow

By Jill Blackledge / IOWA STATE DAILY / October 21, 2005

One of the bigger successes in independent film last year got its start as part of a film festival. "Napoleon Dynamite" earned more than \$44 million in 2004 and was first showcased at the Sundance Film Festival.

This weekend, Iowa hosts its own independent film festival. The Wild Rose Independent Film Festival at the Fleur Cinema and Cafe in Des Moines runs from Thursday through Sunday and will showcase a wide variety of films from documentaries to student productions.

Festival Director Kimberly Busbee says more than 25 films are up for the festival's awards this year, including many entries from Iowa residents. In order to be shown, all entries were prescreened and judged according to the festival's criteria.

"If they made it this far, they're worthy of being screened in the festival," she says.

When choosing entries, Busbee says the judging panel tried to pick interesting and quirky films that are not as likely to be seen by the general public as often as more mainstream films.

"We really expect people are trying to do exciting, surprising, new, maybe sometimes edgy, truthful storytelling," she says.

This year's entries include several student films from around the country, including "Her Summer," a drama by two University of Iowa students, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, through their company, Bluebox Limited.

They have been awarded an Iowa Award for Outstanding Filmmaking in addition to being in the top 3 percent of Project Greenlight, an online script contest sponsored by HBO. Beck and Woods were also recently named semifinalists in MTV's Best Film on Campus Trailer Challenge.

Beck says he thinks an event like the Wild Rose Film Festival is extremely important not only to the Iowa filmmaking scene, but also to potential student filmmakers who want to showcase their work.

"Wild Rose is a great outlet for filmmakers to screen their work, and at the same time, a great place to learn," he says. "Wild Rose really supports student filmmakers and allows them to showcase their talents. I really see the filmmaking community growing in Iowa."

Although she is not connected with a film, Rachel Norgaard, senior in architecture, will be playing the piano at the wine reception to be held Friday evening for the cast of "Boone Style," a film by former Iowan Mas Gardner.

She says when she went to the festival last year, it was inspiring to learn that films don't have to be feature-length to be powerful. She compares the film festival to a compilation CD because the movies are experienced as a whole, rather than individually.

"If people go in with an open mind, it's very powerful because everything is in context with other films," Norgaard says. "They can give appreciation for the genre, even if it is their first experience."

Both Beck and Norgaard say events like the Wild Rose Film Festival are excellent in providing exposure and experience for student filmmakers. Norgaard says any time anyone sees someone's work, it opens up possibilities, even at a smaller venue like the Wild Rose festival.

Beck says part of the reason he thinks the filmmaking community is growing is because of students.

"It's extremely important to have festivals such as this one, in order to support the emerging Iowa film community," he says. "Wild Rose gives us an opportunity to share our films with an audience."

In addition to the films, Busbee says the festival will host a keynote speaker Saturday evening. Greg Alan Williams is a working Hollywood character actor and will also be holding auditions at Wild Rose for an actors seminar.

The festival will conclude Sunday evening, with the awards ceremony Saturday night after Williams' address.

"The arts community in [Des Moines] and around the state is huge, and hopefully as more people learn about filmmaking in Iowa, they'll embrace it and support the festival," Beck says.

Review: "Her Summer"

By John Oak Dalton / MICROCINEMASCENE.COM / May 13, 2005

A young cop goes missing after the brutal murder of two of his brothers; then, a few years later, he makes a mysterious phone call, setting two youths on a path to unravel the mystery in Bryan Woods' Her Summer.

But perhaps the most confounding mystery of all is the fact that there appears to be two separate movies at war with each other. In one, we meet sullen youth Greg (Shane Simmons), whose cop father is estranged from his mother, a woman who has walked out for good the night the story opens. His best bud is laid-back Mark (Travis Shepherd), who is mostly concerned with his own relationship problems but eases his pal's mind with a night of chilling out and relaxing. This half of Her Summer has a very loose, improvisational feel, playing on the chemistry between the characters and a lot of fun "whoa dude"-type dialogue.

In the second part we meet anguished cop Ethan Crowe (Justin Marxen), sent out into the world with only a bulletproof vest and the haircut his momma gave him to combat the forces of the unknown. In an act of somewhat suspect police work, Crowe is left all night alone in the house where his brothers were killed to try to sort out what happened, despite the fact that the house is an active crime scene in an open double-homicide investigation. There Crowe finds cryptic clues that point to a mysterious "Her," and a possible link to the supernatural realm. Marxen is very good in an almost non-speaking role with an expressive, heart-felt performance. I also thought Marxen was a knockout as a needling, motor-mouthed punk in Scott Beck's University Heights, reviewed on this site here, a part so polar opposite of this one that it really highlights Marxen's range.

But Marxen's solid performance, and some genuine chills, are undercut by telegraphed plot points delivered by Simmons and Shepherd in the oddly-executed framing device, where the two teens talk about life while rifling through Greg's dad's casefiles on Crowe's disappearance. I felt as if writer/director Bryan Woods did not trust his audience, or perhaps himself, to be able to divine the nature of the mystery without this skatepunk Greek chorus, which ultimately does a disservice to his story.

Lots of nice shooting (though perhaps one too many master shots during Simmons' and Shepherd's good-natured riffs), and a very polished musical score, add production value. There is a lot of raw talent on display in front of and behind the camera, but a maddeningly-assembled plot, seemingly fusing two disparate short subjects together with a visible caulk bead, subtracts from the whole. However, I am eager to see more from Bluebox Limited as their storytelling skills mature.

Two and a half stars.

Local film mostly good

By AJ Landman / AUGUSTANA OBSERVER / March 24, 2005

Directors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods of Bluebox Limited set out to make a movie blending friendship with suspense. The result was " Her Summer," a murder mystery set in Davenport, IA. In a way their mission was a success: the suspense came through well onscreen. The friendship plot, however, just got in the way.

The movie begins with Ethan Crowe (Justin Marxen) leaving his parents' house on his way to work for the Davenport police force. After discovering the murdered bodies of two of his brothers, Crowe goes insane. He takes the rest of the night off to figure out what just happened. He then disappears for two years without a trace.

The other storyline in the movie explores the friendship of Mark, played by Travis Shepherd, and Greg (Shane Simmons). Greg's father is a police officer and former colleague of Crowe. He has marriage difficulties so longstanding that neither Greg nor his father address the issue. When his father comes home with a box of evidence about the murders and Crowe's disappearance, the boys cannot help but die into the case themselves.

The underlying themes in this movie are friendship and nostalgia. Mark and Greg's friendship is coming apart. The cause of this division is familiar to any young adult: college. Mark has gone off to school at the University of Iowa, while Greg is still in high school but is planning to go to a school in Chicago. This distance is already starting to affect them. Much of the movie seems like a vain attempt to recapture the intimacy of their past.

The parts of the movie not featuring Mark and Greg are truly blood-chilling. Ethan Crowe found himself locked in the same shed in which he found his dead brothers. The shed was dark, and loud noises would come from nowhere, while the shed would shake. Without so much as a line of dialogue, this scene inspired terror. The character of Her, a silent, possibly dead, woman, also had the ability to shock.

The dual storyline lacked the cohesiveness to make it work well. One second Ethan Crowe would be on screen, and the viewer would think that something major was going to happen; the next second, Mark and Greg would be on the screen pulling teenage pranks. The idea of cutting from a story about solving a murder to a vignette about what is a hip way to say Mountain Dew didn't mix well at all. It would be like mixing a teenage sex romp like "American Pie" with Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho."

There are some unanswered questions left when the film finished. For instance, who is Her? Who is the man in black? What does Ethan do for two years alone? How did Ethan suddenly appear at the same park as the two boys? What were the problems between Greg's parents? Why would a responsible police officer leave a box of evidence at home with his high-school son and his college friend? The directors didn't seem to know either, since none of these questions were even remotely addressed.

The movie itself worked on the level of homage to the teenage horror films like "The Blair Witch Project." It is difficult to fault such young filmmakers to aspiring to make another "Blair Witch"-style movie, since it was such a critical and financial success. The major difference is that "The Blair Witch Project" was done with sloppy camera work. Both films claim the true-story route taken by many teenaged scream flicks.

Despite its flaws, this movie is a promising step for these two young directors. With a little time, polishing, and movement away from homage, they will likely be able to work toward what should be their ultimate goal: producing movies that are ground-breaking without losing the accessibility that "Her Summer" shows.

Young Iowa talent makes impact on film-making industry

By Jenna Rehnstrom / MORNINGSIDE COLLEGIAN REPORTER / January 13, 2005

Move over Coen and Farrelly brothers, the next dynamic film-making duo may have hit the scene, and they're from our very own state of Iowa.

Though they may not be related, the team of Bryan Woods and Scott Beck from Bettendorf, Iowa, have been making films together since they were in sixth grade, according to The Daily Iowan. Once the pair hit high school, though, they became serious about the art of filmmaking and began studying the process, from shooting to scriptwriting.

Now, Woods, a student at Scott Community College in Bettendorf, and Beck, who attends the University of Iowa, not only write their own screenplays, but also direct and produce them under their own production company, Bluebox Limited. Though only 20-years-old, the young filmmakers have already made 13 shorts and four feature-length films, which have won them four awards in the past seven years from the Iowa Motion Picture Association.

Among their latest honors, Woods and Beck's films have placed in the top 50 out of 1,700 candidates at the Project Greenlight Competition. The contest was created by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, another team of young, talented screenwriters and is sponsored by Miramax Studios, along with the Bravo Channel. Woods and Beck also recently placed among the top three finalists in the MTV's Best Film on Campus Competition.

Tyler Woods, a Morningside sophomore and another native of Bettendorf, recalls the time he spent with the filmmakers in a high school film class.

"Their stuff was really good; I can only imagine, with the time they've spent working on films since then, how good they must have gotten," said Woods.

Their most recent feature film, "Her Summer," which will be screened on the Morningside campus, is an 80 minute film based on the true events of a 1999 murder in Davenport, Iowa. The plot centers on Ethan Crowe, a police officer, whose two brothers are brutally murdered.

After vowing to solve the crime himself, Crowe camps out at the crime scene where he makes a terrible discovery. After Crowe turns-up missing the next morning, two friends unravel the mystery using the remaining material.

Woods and Beck will be present at the screening of "Her Summer" to introduce their feature film and lead the discussion to follow.

This Academic and Cultural Art Series (ACAS) event will be held in the UPS Auditorium in the Lincoln Center on the Morningside College campus tonight at 7:00pm. The event is co-

sponsored by Writing on Wednesday (WOW) and Entrepreneurship in the Arts and is open to students and the public at no charge.

KDSM explores showing works of Iowa filmmakers

By Jeffrey Bruner / DES MOINES REGISTER / December 16, 2004

A Des Moines television station wants to put the spotlight on Iowa filmmakers.

"There's not a whole lot of venues for it," said Travis Ballstadt, promotions director at KDSM, the Fox affiliate. "I mentioned it to our general manager and he thought it sounded like a decent idea."

Ballstadt is compiling a pilot episode with hopes of getting the program on the air by March. The length or time slot of the weekly show is undetermined but Ballstadt wants it to be flexible to accommodate full-length features.

"I would like it to be mostly a venue for the filmmakers, similar to what Sundance Channel does between their features," he said.

Ballstadt is looking for submissions at this point - he's already gotten some computer-generated short films and plans to feature Quad Cities filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods in the pilot. Their short film "Shades" made the final three in the MTV Best Film on Campus competition.

"There are many people in the state who have no idea about the films being made in Iowa, and KDSM is helping us get our material out there," Beck said. "The program is a great opportunity for filmmakers to gain a larger audience, and it also supports the Iowa film industry, which definitely needs to be recognized."

Beck is absolutely right. You have no clue how much is going on in Iowa until you look at something like the Wild Rose Film Festival at the Vaudeville Mews or the Des Moines Art Center Film + Video contest. It's only a matter of time before our own Alexander Payne emerges.

Picture Perfect

By Erin Randolph / DES MOINES CITYVIEW / December 2004

Besides, though it may not be an easy thing to do, Iowa filmmakers can generate their own buzz without even leaving the state. Scott Beck and his filmmaking partner Bryan Woods, who together started a film company called Bluebox Limited, have recently brought the national spotlight to Iowa by becoming finalists in two national student filmmaking competitions.

Most recently, the pair became one of three finalists in MTVU's Best Film on Campus competition before ultimately losing out to another filmmaker. However, "Shades," a short about a young man who comes to terms with a troubled relationship, was screened by such Hollywood bigwigs as directors Joel Schumacher ("Phone Booth," "Batman & Robin") and Gus Van Sant ("Good Will Hunting"), which is priceless in and of itself. Prior to that, the two were among the 50 finalists in the Project Greenlight competition, started by Ben Affleck and Matt Damon to find budding screenwriters and directors, for their three-minute short film "Amber."

"We never expect too much out of these contests, and then somehow we end up getting more than that," says Beck, a 20-year-old student at the University of Iowa. "It's just a good way to approach these contests, it seems. It helps knowing that we're making films that people receive and that people will actually appreciate, but we still understand that we have to work hard. It seems like it's going to be a long, hard road regardless of the successes we've had lately. But we definitely enjoy having these boosts of confidence along the way."

From the time Beck and Woods started taking their roles as filmmakers seriously in 2001, they had goals and have been pushing themselves to reach them. Now they're at a point where they're able to market themselves a bit better, though they know they still have room to grow, Beck says. The two are working on writing their next screenplay, and their goal is to take it to the next level through a bigger budget and a bigger, regional casting call.

"We're setting pretty lofty goals for ourselves," Beck says. "We're at the point that, even though we're 20, we're looking for ways to put ourselves ahead of our last feature. We just really, really want to reach a bigger audience. Not just in Iowa, but outside of Iowa."

Bluebox Limited's Beck applied to film school at UCLA in Los Angeles, but says it was more just to see if he could get in. If he gets accepted, he'll have to think hard about it, but he's content staying in Iowa.

"It's a great community to make films. Actually, all over Iowa is due to the resources," Beck says. "As far as film production, there's not much of it going on in Iowa. I think that's what really attracts people to [get involved in] the film productions that do take place here. It's a place where we've grown up and it's a place we enjoy bringing this type of entertainment to. We sort of see this as an opportunity to expand Iowa's film industry by staying here and producing works here."

Bluebox filmmakers take the unorthodox road to education, partnership

By Jeff Ignatius / RIVER CITIES' READER / November 24, 2004

Famous filmmaking pairs usually work together on everything or have clearly defined roles. The Wachowski brothers – the forces behind The Matrix series – both write and direct. Joel and Ethan Coen – the hip duo that made Fargo and many other cult classics – write together but split their duties otherwise, with Joel directing and Ethan producing.

Bryan Woods and Scott Beck, the 20-year-old talents behind the Quad Cities-based Bluebox Limited, never went to film school, and don't seem terribly interested in convention. At their tender ages, they've made four feature films – two (University Heights and Her Summer) released this year alone – and 13 short movies. They were among 50 finalists (out of 1,700 entrants) in HBO's Project Greenlight directing competition, and this month they added another honor to their résumés by having their short Shades selected as one of three finalists in the MTV Best Film on Campus contest. (They didn't win.)

But they have a much different way of working together than other moviemaking pairs. While they've shared directing duties on their short films for contests, they otherwise work separately. Woods writes and directs his own scripts, with Beck producing them, and vice-versa. So although they all come out under the Bluebox banner, the movies are far more the products of an individual filmmaker and sensibility.

“That's why we're able to make movies so fast,” Woods said. “Each of us has our own vision,” Beck said.

But the films couldn't be made – at least not as well – without the help of the other Bluebox partner. “We both support each other,” Beck said. They review the other's scripts and offer feedback, and the nondirecting partner helps coordinate the production.

“We can both see what we put into each other's projects,” Beck said.

Although Beck and Woods are young, their concerns aren't juvenile. The ensemble drama University Heights touches on issues of identity, suicide, sexuality, drug use, and racism, and one critic (<http://www.microcinemascene.com>) praised the director's visual storytelling in a mixed review: “Beck has a good eye for shooting and editing and comes up with some nice set pieces.” Her Summer is a small-cast thriller in which a police officer discovers two of his brothers murdered and – after spending the night at the crime scene – ends up missing himself.

Beck and Woods have been actively making movies together since 2000, their sophomore years in high school. They continue now even though Beck attends the University of Iowa and Woods goes to Scott Community College.

For Woods, the inspiration to become a filmmaker started not with a great movie but with a disappointing one: Brian de Palma's *Mission to Mars*. "I took it upon myself to write something better," he said. That didn't work out so well, he said, but the seed was sown.

"Making movies was the culmination of our writing," Woods said. "The stories we've always been writing or telling are visual stories."

Beck said they work well together because they have similar goals and working habits. When asked where they'd like to be in five years, their targets were lofty but thoughtful.

"For us, five years is a lot of time," Woods said. They noted that John Singleton was 24 when he made *Boyz n the Hood*. "In five years, we should be doing pretty well," Beck said. Within that time frame, he added, he'd like to be working with a six- or seven-figure budget.

But the pair claims they aren't interested in taking filmmaking jobs for money alone. "We don't want to be sucked into the wrong project," Beck said. "Originality is really important to us," Woods added.

The pair isn't necessarily looking for fame and fortune. Beck said he wants to reach a mass audience and be able to support a family. Woods might be a little more artistically ambitious: "We want to have an impressive body of work," he said.

A six-figure budget would be a major leap for the pair. So would a four-figure budget. One thing that's distinguished Bluebox so far is how much it accomplishes with very little money. With a digital camera, volunteer labor from actors and crew, and a home computer for editing, the Bluebox Limited team spends between \$50 (the feature *Her Summer*) and \$400 to make its movies. And you'd never know it by looking at the production values.

Shoestring budgets don't necessarily scream amateur. Actor Travis Shepherd has worked with other filmmakers in addition to being a Bluebox regular, and he has nothing but praise for Woods and Beck. The two are "by far the easiest to work with," Shepherd said. "They have the clearest vision. When they're writing it, they have the whole movie in their heads."

Take Project Greenlight. The contest – in which winners get \$1 million to produce and film a movie – has so far generated two awful movies, and shown the directors to be woefully ill-equipped for a professional set.

Shepherd said he believes Woods and Beck would "have done way better" with Project Greenlight than the directors who actually won, mostly because of their preparation. The winners – who made the Miramax-released *Stolen Summer* and *The Battle of Shaker Heights* – "didn't have the vision that these guys have," he said. And unlike the Project Greenlight winners – do-it-yourself filmmakers without much experience with professional cast or crew – Beck worked with a cast of 55 people and crew of 10 people on *University Heights*.

"Preparation has always been the number-one priority," Woods said, including using shooting schedules and storyboards. So far, the duo has only bailed on one project, which they abandoned

after it was half-shot three years ago. They pledge that won't happen again. "We finish," Woods said.

"We're on our way to being well-equipped" for the professional filmmaking world, Beck said. "We're also building a sense of the business side of things." Bluebox has sold more than 100 copies of University Heights; the movie has been screened in four states, and it premiered at the Adler over the summer.

In the years they've been serious about filmmaking, "we've been progressing faster and faster with each film," Beck said. "Whatever we just made is best," Woods said.

Still, the young filmmakers recognize that they have a lot to learn and a long way to grow.

Beck said he and Woods have had a tough time taking and applying criticism. But eventually they realized that protecting their egos was less important than making the films better. "We've come a complete 180," Beck said. People offering suggestions "ultimately represent the audience.

"Another thing we've improved on is getting what we want," Beck said. Early in their moviemaking, they'd go with what they had, they said. Now, they do more takes to get the performance or shot they're looking for.

Woods said his biggest challenge is "making a story people can understand." Because he's so close to his material, he said, he sometimes forgets that the audience only has access to what's on the screen, not everything that's in his head.

What's most refreshing about Bluebox is how cognizant Beck and Woods are about being young and raw. "Making these movies is our film school," Woods said. Yet he acknowledged that they lose something by skipping a formal film education: making contacts.

And they even know they haven't arrived at a signature style yet, and that their movies will almost necessarily be somewhat derivative. Other filmmakers' styles "sneak in, because that's what we're learning from," Beck said. "We definitely try to stay away from going off of other people's styles," Woods said.

Even though they primarily work separately, Beck said he hopes the Bluebox relationship continues. "I think we've found a really good working condition."

"I think we're doing really good for student filmmakers," Woods said.

Local film company makes MTV film finals

By Sean Leary / MOLINE DISPATCH / November 2004

Bettendorf film company Bluebox Limited has advanced to the final three in the MTV Best Film on Campus Competition.

Bluebox -- Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, both 20 -- learned they'd made it to the finals this weekend. Their short film "Shades" will be critiqued this week by three groups of judges: Hollywood directors Joel Schumacher ("Batman and Robin"), Gus Van Sant ("Good Will Hunting") and Allison Anders ("Grace of My Heart"); MTV staffers; and online voters.

Today, MTV will list the finalists on www.mtvu.com, allowing movie buffs nationwide to vote for their favorites of the three films.

The winner of the contest will receive two tickets to the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, an internship with MTV Films, and pitch meetings with MTV Films and Creative Artists Agency.

Bluebox created the four-minute "Shades," about a troubled young man suffering from recurring nightmares of a terrible accident, exclusively for the contest. Its cast features local actors, including Travis Shepherd and Christy Sullivan of Bettendorf and Jim Siokos of Rock Island.

Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods have been writing, directing and producing films together for seven years. They have produced 13 shorts and four feature-length movies, including their most recent, "Her Summer," which debuted at the Putnam/IMAX Theater in October.

They have won awards from the Iowa Motion Picture Association and the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival. They also climbed to the top 50 in the HBO/Bravo/Miramax-sponsored "Project Greenlight" contest in April.

For more information on Bluebox, see www.blueboxlimited.com.

UI filmmaker makes MTV contest final

By Traci Finch / THE DAILY IOWAN / November 9, 2004

Linda Beck couldn't grab her cell phone to tell relatives the news fast enough during her son's birthday dinner in late October.

Scott Beck, a UI sophomore, received a voice mail from MTV while dining on bacon cheeseburgers from Famous Dave's. After checking his messages, he casually relayed the information to his family: His four-minute movie had been chosen as a semifinalist in MTV's Best Film on Campus competition. He was notified late last week that his film was named one of three finalists in the contest.

"His humility is unbelievable... When he called me Friday to tell me he made the top three, he first asked if I'd made an appointment for a haircut on Saturday," Linda Beck said, laughing.

Success in the film industry is nothing new for Scott Beck - he and co-director, producer, writer, and good friend Bryan Woods formed a production company, Bluebox Limited, three years ago. The duo has won four awards in the past seven years from the Iowa Motion Picture Association out of a catalogue of 13 short films and four feature-length movies. A recent feature has been screened at four Midwest festivals.

Scott Beck and Woods, who met in sixth grade, began their career together filming their Star Wars toys.

"We both kind of did the action-figure thing on our own before we met each other," said Woods, who is a sophomore at Scott Community College.

It wasn't until the Bettendorf natives' sophomore year in high school that they became serious about filmmaking, studying every aspect from sound to scriptwriting, Scott Beck said.

"Each [part of filmmaking] is really fun," he said. "I would say probably the production phase, when we're actually shooting, is the most fun."

He and Woods teamed up for the contest in September to create the four-minute short, titled "Shades," a dark drama in which the main character deals with the murder of his girlfriend. Beck wrote the screenplay in one day, and the film was shot in three.

"Anytime Scott comes up with something, we usually respond to the same material," Woods said.

Scott Beck said the idea stemmed from a feature-length film he wrote but didn't plan on producing.

He and Woods had difficulty condensing his vision into an-under-five-minute piece; they had to rework the movie several times before they and their parents, who previewed the film, were satisfied.

"He's always been able to tie different stories together," Linda Beck said. "He's not just trying to make a movie to occupy an hour and a half."

An online voting system determined the finalists for the contest, and now a team of Hollywood directors, MTV staff, and online voters will determine the winner of the contest, who will receive two tickets to the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and an internship with MTV Films.

"It's amazing when someone whose films you've been watching for the longest time is actually going to see your work," Woods said about directors Gus Van Sant and Joel Schumacher, two of the judges.

Actor and recent UI alum Travis Shepherd, who starred in the film, knew Woods and Beck in high school, and he has worked in several of their movies. Shepherd graduated with a degree in history but would love to act.

"I always wanted to be an actor, but I never really took it seriously until I met these guys," he said.

Scott Beck said as many as 75 actors have come out for different Bluebox auditions, but he wrote the "Shades" screenplay with Shepherd, one of the four characters, in mind.

"Shades" can be viewed at www.blueboxlimited.com, where viewers can then vote for the film. The winner will be notified Friday.

E-mail DI reporter Traci Finch at: traci-finch@uiowa.edu.

UI student finalist in MTV film contest

By Deanna Truman-Cook / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / November 6, 2004

Scott Beck is keeping his fingers crossed.

The University of Iowa sophomore's film "Shades" is a finalist in MTV's Best Film on Campus competition.

If the 20-year-old wins, he will get two tickets to the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, an internship with MTV and will have pitch meetings with MTV executives.

He's asking for your help.

The final three films in the competition can be viewed and voted on at www.mtvu.com/contests/best_film/ beginning Monday.

In addition to the public's votes, directors and MTV staff will judge Beck's four-minute film, which he made with friend Bryan Woods of Bettendorf.

"We want it pretty badly," Beck said. "This seems like a great opportunity."

The pair made the film in September just for the contest. Beck describes it as a dark drama focusing on a young man who suffers from reoccurring nightmares.

If they win and eventually make it big, Woods promises that the pair will not forget Iowa, which is part of his pitch on why you should vote for "Shades."

"It is really good to support Iowa art and filmmaking," Woods said.

They said they don't know for sure when a winner will be announced.

From stage to screen

By Mike Augspurger / THE BURLINGTON HAWK EYE / November 5, 2004

A Burlington woman, who has found she likes the small screen as much as she likes the stage, never imagined she'd be in a film that could win a national collegiate contest.

The film, "Shades," is a semi-finalist in the mtvU "Best Film on Campus" competition, in which college filmmakers across the nation created five-minute short films of their choice. mtvU is the online version of MTV that caters to college campuses.

Marianne Bourg, who appears in the majority of the short film shot in the Quad Cities, portrays a young man's mother.

"She's helping him deal with his nightmares and all the other things going on in his life," said Scott Beck, who produced, directed and wrote the nominated feature with Bryan Woods.

The two men have had no formal training in film-making, yet have been recognized across the United States for their work. They have been writing, directing, and producing films together for the past seven years.

"We're so ecstatic. It was a surprise to see it get this far," Beck said of "Shades."

This was the pair's first attempt at a short film. They have made four feature-length films in the past with three of them featuring Bourg, always playing the role of a mother. They recruited her for the latest film — once again, as a mother.

"We wrote it specifically for her. She has the talent and definitely plays this character well," Beck said.

Still, though, he said it was difficult putting 90 minutes of story-telling into less than five and maintain the film's depth.

"I found it easier to do a feature-length thing in 90 minutes. Five minutes is much more difficult. It's a lot of stuff in little time," Beck said.

Bourg has expanded her frontiers since she first took to the stage for dance recitals when she was 5 years old. She has been in local television commercials, and has worked with theater or similar groups in Cedar Rapids, Dubuque and Des Moines.

It was through a Des Moines friend that Bourg learned that Beck and Woods were looking for someone to pay a mother's role in an independent full-length movie.

Bourg is in her 40s and has children, so she thought she could handle the part. She did well and the movie makers have used her three times in motherly roles.

Performances for a camera are much different than on a large stage, which actors often exaggerate movements to fill spacious venues, Bourg said.

"In front of a camera, your movement is a lot smaller and more natural," she said. "It feels really good. I never thought I would like movies."

Beck believes there is a chance his movie may be one of the three finalists picked by MTV personnel with help from online voting that ends Tuesday. Near the end of this month, MTV will announce its final pick. MTV also has been airing the Top 10 selections at 700 campuses.

The film was shot in September and edited in one cut. Family and friends were given the first look. The five minutes were confusing, they thought. The two men worked it over and made a four-minute version that passed the test.

With the nomination, they've gained more publicity. It's another achievement they have under their young belts.

"It's nice to have contests like this. You never know if you're going the right way. Being recognized shows you are," he said.

Bourg said she was glad to be on board with the young creators and donated her time for the movie.

"Anything to help a young, aspiring director," she said.

Having worked with the pair on three films, Bourg has seen the men's work improve with each reel, especially Beck's.

"He's a great editor," she said. "He's a good director, but his editing is awesome. He's so positive. I have a really good feeling that he is going to go places."

A mother should know.

MTV delivers birthday surprise to local filmmakers

By Sean Leary / MOLINE DISPATCH / October 31, 2004

Scott Beck got one heck of a birthday gift this year.

The Bettendorf man and his filmmaking partner, Bryan Woods, 20, who make up local production company Bluebox Ltd., have advanced to the semi-finals of the MTV Best Film on Campus Competition.

The duo, who had reached the top 50 of the HBO/Bravo/Miramax-sponsored "Project Greenlight" contest in April, got the news Friday -- Mr. Beck's 20th birthday.

"I got the call when I was out for my birthday dinner, so it was quite a present to receive!" Mr. Beck said. "We were both surprised and very excited."

Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods' short film "Shades" will be critiqued by three groups of judges, including Hollywood directors Joel Schumacher ("Batman and Robin"), Gus Van Sant ("Good Will Hunting") and Allison Anders ("Grace of My Heart"); MTV staffers; and online voters.

MTV will list the semi-finalists Monday on http://www.mtvu.com/contests/best_film/, allowing cineastes from across the country to vote for their faves -- including "Shades."

"We're really hoping to get a big turnout, and we're definitely encouraging people to log on and vote," Mr. Beck said.

The winner of the contest will receive two tickets to the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, an internship with MTV Films, and pitch meetings with MTV Films and Creative Artists Agency.

"Even if we don't win, it's another accomplishment to be proud of," Mr. Beck said. "Since filmmaking is a tough craft, it's extremely nice to have a contest that recognizes young filmmakers and says, 'You're on the right track.'"

"Just to know that we are doing something good is reward enough. If we actually win, Bryan and I will be working non-stop to create the best film pitch possible. Not to mention, we will try to bump into as many celebrities as possible at Sundance!"

Bluebox created the four-minute "Shades" -- about a troubled young man suffering from recurring nightmares of a terrible accident -- exclusively for the contest. It features local actors, including Travis Shepherd and Christy Sullivan of Bettendorf and Jim Siokos of Rock Island.

Rushing to meet an October 2004, deadline, the pair wrote, directed, produced, edited and test-screened the short in a matter of weeks.

"Bryan and I thought we had good material to work with, and then, after editing it, we were uncertain about how MTV would receive the short film," Mr. Beck said.

Apparently, it was received quite well.

Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods have been writing, directing and producing films together for seven years. They have produced 13 shorts and four feature-length movies, including their most recent, "Her Summer," which debuted at the Putnam/IMAX Theater earlier this month.

They have won awards from the Iowa Motion Picture Association and Wild Rose Independent Film Festival.

"Whatever happens, both Bryan and I are going to continue making films -- that's unquestioned," Mr. Beck said. "It's something we both have a love and passion for, and there isn't any other profession in the world that we would have the same drive and ambition for."

For more information on Bluebox, see www.blueboxlimited.com.

Bluebox Limited duo's 'Her Summer' making appearance on the BIG screen

By Julie Jensen / MOLINE DISPATCH / October 22, 2004

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, otherwise known as Bluebox Limited, have come a long way since they began making movies with camcorders as sixth-graders. Their fourth feature-length film will be shown at the Putnam IMAX Theatre at 8:30 p.m. Saturday.

The film is titled "Her Summer," produced by Mr. Beck and written and directed by Mr. Woods, who said, "It's our first audience-seizer."

On a routine police investigation, Officer Ethan Crowe discovers two of his brothers brutally murdered. Determined to solve the mystery behind their death, he stays on the scene all night, making a horrifying discovery. The next morning, the investigator is missing. "Her Summer" then recounts the events that took place that night, unraveled by two friends who come across the investigation material.

The film was shot in Davenport and Bettendorf between June and October on a \$50 budget, and Mr. Woods calls it "an important human story about friendship."

They wanted to show it at the IMAX because "the sound quality will be great, and the film deals with a lot of sound," he said. "We were trying to duplicate that edge-of-the-seat feeling you get when you watch a movie like 'Jurassic Park.'"

The cast includes Justin Marxen, Davenport; Shane Simmons, Pleasant Valley; and Travis Shepherd, Bettendorf.

Christy Sullivan, who plays the dead woman's ghost, is the only female in the cast. The other men are Jim Siokos, Ian Klink, Aaron Sartor, Andy Koch, Steve Strickland and Ryan Olson.

The 20-year old Bluebox boys are sophomores this year, Mr. Beck at the University of Iowa, and Mr. Woods at Scott Community College. Eventually, they plan to migrate west to Hollywood.

They have made 17 films altogether. Their latest short, "Shades," was filmed for the MTV Best Film on Campus national competition.

"It's about a 20-year old dealing with the loss of his murdered girlfriend," Mr. Woods said.

Their feature-length film, "University Heights," received national attention, including five nominations at the Wild Rose Independent Film Festival in Des Moines in early October.

"We didn't win anything," Mr. Woods said, "but the response was good. A lot of actors came up afterwards and talked to us about the movie."

They did, however place in the Top 50 in the Project Greenlight directing contest last April, competing with more than 1,700 contestants who offered a three-minute scene to demonstrate directing talent.

Talking about the \$50 budget for "Her Summer," Mr. Woods said, "It helps when everyone works for free. If you spend a lot of time making it look good, you can get by on very little."

The film runs about 80 minutes and is rated PG-13 "because of some language." Tickets are \$7.75, and reservations are advisable.

Call the Putnam/IMAX at (563) 324-1933. The doors open at 8 p.m., and the show starts at 8:30 p.m.

Seasoning shows in Bluebox's 'Her Summer'

By Linda Cook / QUAD-CITY TIMES / October 21, 2004

The Bluebox Productions guys have been hard at work. And now you can see their latest project, bigger than life, at the Putnam Museum IMAX Theatre.

“Her Summer” includes two stories that overlap. One is a murder mystery based on a true story. The other simply is the story of two guys whose friendship unfolds in their dialogue as they hang out together.

Davenport Police Officer Ethan Crowe (Justin Marxen) is part of an investigation, and is on hand when he finds that two of his brothers have been murdered. Ethan remains on the crime scene all night long — and then vanishes.

Two years later, the investigation heats up again. Greg (Shane Simmons) is the son of one of the officers working the case. Greg and his friend Mark (Travis Shepherd) sift through a box of evidence, transcripts and other evidence in the case while they imagine what might have happened.

Filmmakers Scott Beck, who produces, and Bryan Woods, who writes, directs and produces, continue to show off their expertise in camera angles, close ups, and atmosphere. They managed some neat scenes here, including a scene, shot from above, of the opening of a shed and some interesting transition titles and clues.

Especially dynamic is the performance by Shepherd, who seems to have a knack for appearing natural in front of the camera. The most realistic scenes are those of the two friends simply having conversations about girls, college, and their everyday lives. It would be nice to see a Bluebox feature with Shepherd and Jim Siokos, who starred in the Bluebox production “University Heights,” in major roles together (Siokos has a smaller role in “Her Summer.”)

Beck is a student at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and Woods is a student at Scott Community College in Bettendorf. They have been making films together for the past seven years, and have won several awards, including four from the Iowa Motion Picture Association.

For more go to www.blueboxlimited.com.

Busy UI freshman's film judged one of best at Hardacre festival

By Eric Clark / CEDAR RAPIDS GAZETTE / August 5, 2004

Scott Beck has made three feature-length films and he's working on a fourth. He runs a movie production company and his work has appeared in a handful of film festivals.

Quite a resume for a 19-year-old who just finished his freshman year at the University of Iowa.

Beck's latest release, "University Heights," will be screened at the Eighth Annual Hardacre Film Festival. More than 70 films were submitted for consideration. Of those, 20 films from around the world will be shown during the two-day event at the Hardacre Theatre.

A panel of five judges named "University Heights" one of the top films in the festival. The 96-minute film is about the emotional struggles of four characters on a college campus: a love-struck teenager with drug problems, an English teacher with sex issues, a philosophy teacher who owes thousands of dollars to a drug cartel and a racist student who realizes he hates himself more than anyone else.

"I like to put people in certain instances and then figure out how they would get out of them," Beck says.

"University Heights" was shot digitally for \$300 and features 55 actors and extras.

Beck made the film with assistance from his filmmaking partner, Bryan Woods, 19, a student at Scott Community College in Bettendorf. The duo run their own production company called Bluebox Ltd.

Review: "University Heights"

By John Oak Dalton / MICROCINEMASCENE.COM / July 23, 2004

A drug-dealing professor, a colleague who questions his sexuality, and several of their problematic students are the focus of a fairly fully-realized tapestry of characters and situations in Scott Beck's ensemble piece *University Heights*. How these troubled character's lives cross each other's paths in various ways, sometimes explosively, is at the core of the drama.

Beck has a good eye for shooting and editing and comes up with some nice set pieces, including the opening sequence and some well-executed side jaunts into different character's thoughts. His cast compliments his work with some finely-wrought performances, such as Jim Siokos' turn as the haunted prof trying to get out of the criminal life; but especially compelling were Sabien Minter and Justin Marxen as two street toughs whose constant goading and bullying of each other and others leads to tragedy.

But *University Heights* loses its thread with some shaky plotting, especially in the last third of the feature. Beck is a young director, and perhaps can be excused the fantasy that the brightest, prettiest, tannest girl in college will romantically pursue a mumbling, awkward, pale geek, but other elements can't be glossed over so readily; like the singularly most unhelpful suicide hotline operator ever, nor the fact that a judiciously-placed call to 911 during at least three critical junctures in the feature could have drastically altered the outcome of the character's lives.

I think Beck has his visual storytelling down pat, but needs seasoning in emotional storytelling to allow his work to fully come into its own. Still, *University Heights* is a watchable microcinema drama with several attractive elements. I would be interested in seeing more from Scott Beck.

Two and a half stars.

Q-C filmmakers' \$300 effort to debut

By Mark McLaughlin / MOLINE DISPATCH / June 25, 2004

Movie moguls in Hollywood usually think they're doing a miraculous job if they create a feature film for just \$1 million dollars. But with that kind of money, Quad-Cities filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods could have made 3,333 films -- and still had \$100 to spare.

"We made our new movie 'University Heights' for about \$300," Mr. Beck said. "A lot of people donated space for us to shoot in restaurants and people's houses. We received a lot of local support, and we're very thankful for that."

The feature film was shot from February to May of this year. "It took 16 days throughout those months," said Mr. Beck. He explained that the plot of the 96-minute movie "follows four lives on a college campus, along with four problems seeking answers."

The movie stars Jim Siokos as the philosophy instructor, Travis Shepherd as the English teacher, Shane Simmons and Sabien Minter as the college students, and Justin Marxen as a friend of the students.

"'University Heights' is an examination of life and the choices we make," said Mr. Beck, who wrote and directed the film. Mr. Woods served as assistant director and producer. "This is the film that we want to take places -- it blows anything else we've done out of the water," Mr. Beck added.

Mr. Beck, 19, was born in Denver and now lives in Bettendorf. He started making films at age 10, using a shoulder-mounted video camera. His first movie was a 10-minute musical called "Oregon Trail," which he made with his sister Christina. "I watch it for laughs now," he said.

In sixth grade, he met Mr. Woods, and they soon became friends and movie collaborators. "We started doing some stop-motion projects with a big collection of Star Wars action figures," he said. In the seventh grade, they made a five-minute horror movie called "The Sleep-Over," written and directed by Mr. Beck and starring Mr. Woods.

In 2001, the two young entrepreneurs formed their production company, Bluebox Limited. The next year, they premiered two films at North Scott High School in Eldridge, Iowa -- "Remembering November" and "Prism."

In September 2003, Bluebox Limited released "Lost & Found," the 70-minute tale of a lonely man who meets a stranger through a classified ad. Their next feature, the 76-minute feature "For Always," premiered in January 2004 at the Brew & View in Rock Island. "It's about a kid who gets a package in the mail with 13 mysterious pictures in it," Mr. Beck said. "The pictures seem to be from a murder scene, and the kid tries to solve the case."

Earlier this year, Mr. Beck and Mr. Woods placed in the top 50 of the Project Greenlight movie competition, sponsored by Miramax Studios and the Bravo Channel and headed by actors Matt Damon and Ben Affleck. Their contest submission was a three-minute short called "Amber," which will be shown July 20 as part of the Iowa Motion Picture Association short-film collection in Des Moines.

Currently, Bluebox is shooting scenes for the multimedia comedy "Your Favorite Band," a combination live action show and film about struggling rock musicians that will run Aug. 5-15 at ComedySportz in Rock Island.

What will the two moviemakers work on next? "We start work very soon on a suspense thriller called 'Her Summer,'" Mr. Beck said. "In it, two kids come across a police report about two unsolved murders, and they put together the evidence."

Iowans' film opens Saturday

By Anne Kapler / CEDAR RAPIDS GAZETTE / June 24, 2004

Iowa film company Bluebox Limited will premiere its latest film, "University Heights," on Saturday at the Adler Theatre in Davenport.

"University Heights" tells the story of four people on a college campus: a philosophy teacher who owes money to a drug cartel, a student consumed by racism and disgust, a teenager who hopes to fall in love but is troubled by drugs and an English teacher fighting his sexuality.

"What I've done is create characters with interesting backgrounds that are in tough situations," says Scott Beck, 19, a University of Iowa student who wrote, directed and produced the film with business partner Bryan Woods. "It's interesting to see how these characters try to get out of these situations.

Woods, 19, is a student at Scott Community College in the Quad Cities.

They have been making films together for seven years. In 2004, they placed in the Project Greenlight Top 50 Directors competition with a three-minute short. Project Greenlight is a screenwriting and directing contest created by actors Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, and is sponsored by Miramax Film and Television.

"University Heights" was shot in the Quad Cities and Iowa City. The name was locally inspired, too.

"I was driving through the city one day and saw the sign for University Heights," Beck says, "and it struck me that University Heights goes with the film because it's about four lives on a college campus, and it's universal because there are University Heightses everywhere."

The film has been selected for film festivals in Rapid City, S.D., and Minneapolis.

With 'University,' Bluebox reaches new heights

By Linda Cook / QUAD-CITY TIMES / June 24, 2004

Note to Bluebox Productions: You're getting there, guys.

"University Heights," the latest from Bluebox Limited (filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods), is hands-down their best. This is their third feature film. They've come a long, long way since ... high school.

I know, that sounds ridiculous. And yet these two young filmmakers, truly veterans of sorts, have done just that with "University Heights," which weaves together the stories of several people who are trying to find themselves.

This contemporary tale is a look at a college campus and the people involved in it, including a philosophy teacher who struggles over the death of his wife and simultaneously grapples with a debt he owes to drug dealers; a student who thinks he may have found the girl of his dreams but isn't mature enough to leave behind getting wasted with his friends; a student determined to carry out a hateful act; and a teacher who struggles with his sexual preference.

Some of the actors are fine in their roles, some are, well, less than fine. But standing out from among the performers is Jim Siokos as Tom Adams, an instructor who is in debt to drug suppliers. He's one of those rare actors who is so natural it's uncanny — he's beyond good. Bluebox would bode well to use his talent again.

This time around, it's much easier for viewers to follow the story threads as they focus on first one, then another, of the main characters.

The camera work, as always, is excellent.

By the way: Bluebox Limited was in the running for Project Greenlight's final 50 in the directors' competition this year. The competition, which began three years ago, was created by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, and is sponsored by Bravo and Miramax Pictures.

Are they ready to compete with the veterans? Well, not yet but they're still in college. They have a lot of experience under their belts now, and have proven themselves able to handle the camera deftly. Now they need to find more performers like Siokos as they mature along with their craft.

In a couple of years ... who knows?

Local filmmakers showing off new film this weekend

By Deanna Truman-Cook / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / June 24, 2004

"University Heights," a film by a University of Iowa sophomore, will debut Saturday at the Adler Theatre in Davenport.

Scott Beck shot the film at several locations in Iowa City, including the UI campus, particularly the English/Philosophy Building and Mayflower and Currier Residence Halls, The Mill Restaurant and The Brown Bottle, among others.

Beck and fellow filmmaker Bryan Woods, both natives of Bettendorf, also shot at locations in Davenport and Rock Island, Ill.

Tickets to the screening in Davenport are \$5.

Beck calls the 96-minute film a reflection on American life.

"It is an examination of life and the choices we make," the 19-year-old said. "'University Heights' grasps the everyday struggles of humanity - finding yourself."

The movie is set in modern day on a Midwest college campus similar in size to UI. It tells the tale of four lives: an instructor consumed by guilt and thousands of dollars in debt to a drug cartel; a teacher angered by his sexuality; a teen addicted to drugs; and a student troubled by his beliefs. Because of adult situations, the film is for high school age viewers and older.

"It is for any fans of character pieces as well as just people interested in different story lines and something unique," Beck said.

The movie has surpassed his expectations.

"We were just blown away by what it became," he said.

The film's budget was only \$300. It caught the attention of organizers of the 2004 Microcinema Fest in Rapid City, S.D., where it will be shown July 10-11.

Beck and Woods have made 12 other films and have won several awards, most recently the Award of Achievement for "Remembering November" and the Award of Excellence for "Prism" at the 2003 Iowa Motion Picture Association.

Filmmaking duo set for premiere

By Lindsey Ignace / THE DAILY IOWAN / June 21, 2004

People always say, Don't mix business with pleasure. But that is just the combination that works for two 19-year-old Bettendorf filmmakers.

UI sophomore Scott Beck and Scott Community College student Bryan Woods will hold the premiere of their film, University Heights, on June 26 in Davenport. The film, which is about four people on a college campus dealing with life, will show at the Adler Theatre at 7 p.m. for \$5 a ticket.

"It's the biggest thing we've ever done," said Beck, the film's writer and director. "I'm excited and nervous."

Fifty local actors from Iowa City and the Quad Cities partook in the film, Woods said.

"Hardly any of the actors had film experience. I was impressed by their skills," Beck said.

Before filming began, Beck and Woods invested thousands of dollars in new equipment, but the film itself cost only \$300.

The duo have been making films together since meeting in middle school seven years ago.

"Filmmaking was always something I and Scott did for fun. We used to make movies with action figures," said Woods.

Since junior high, the filmmakers have moved beyond action figures. In 2001, they started their own production company, Bluebox Limited.

"During work, we are really professional, and it's easier to get stuff done," Woods said. "We click with our ideas. We really trust each other and go with it."

The two also participated in the third season of the Bravo Channel's "Project Greenlight," a contest and television show started by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck for amateur directors and screenwriters. Beck and Woods were too young to participate in the first season and opted out of the second.

"We found out about the third one and gave it a shot," Beck said.

The students sent "Project Greenlight" a three-minute film and finished in the top 50 out of 700. They have since gained some recognition.

Woods and Beck, who have no formal training, learned their craft through hands-on experience and watching tons of movies. Both cite Paul Thomas Anderson, the director of *Boogie Nights* and *Punch Drunk Love*, as an influence on their work.

"I'm really glad we learned it on our own," Woods said. "The knowledge is so rich."

Beck and Woods switch off writing and directing their movies. Last week, the two started production on Woods' film, *Her Summer*, which is about a police officer on a routine investigation who finds his brothers murdered in a shed.

The pair want to make films that are entertaining but also have a message.

"We want to be sure we are making the best stuff possible," Woods said.

Movies begin in Bettendorf

By David Burke / QUAD-CITY TIMES / June 6, 2004

What is it about Bettendorf?

In the space of the last few years, the city and its high school have produced a filmmaker whose work played at the Cannes Film Festival; three directors whose work was considered for the made-for-cable moviemaker contest "Project Greenlight"; and the star of a major movie last summer.

And that's just a few of the accomplishments of those who have walked the halls of Bettendorf High School.

Both teachers and alumni laugh about the notion of something being in the water at BHS, but wouldn't it be interesting to see wannabe filmmakers lining up at the drinking fountain?

Ethel Hegeman, who does work with video production in addition to her duties in the high school library, said students want to participate in video and film projects, and the students have the support of their parents.

"We give them the opportunity to experiment in a safe environment," Hegeman said. "They have a lot of exposure on how to make movies, and they watch those DVDs that have all those special features on them. They're a generation that sees in video, and they communicate that way."

The school's art department offers classes in multimedia production, including Photoshop and light motion. Bettendorf also offers a class in TV tech, where students get a taste of making commercials, news, interviews, a children's video and music video.

"Some of them discover that's what they want to do when they take the class," Hegeman said. "They don't necessarily know that when they go in. They find it's really conducive to their talents."

Joe McCarthy, whose short film, "The Rick" competed in the Cannes Film Festival's Cinefondation class last month, developed more of an interest in movies after he left high school.

"In my case, it was a way to entertain ourselves in high school by screwing around with the video camera," said McCarthy, whose film did not make the top three in the contest but met with favorable response. "I don't know if that corresponds to Bettendorf in any way."

Scott Beck, who collaborates with fellow 2003 Bettendorf grad Bryan Woods for their own production company called Bluebox Limited, is also at a loss to explain the Bettendorf connection.

“It seems like there are quite a few guys out there continuing movies,” he said. “I’m not sure if there’s a connection between them, it’s just what we liked to do.”

Bluebox Limited’s newest film, “University Heights,” premieres June 26 at the RiverCenter Adler Theatre. Beck calls the college-based movie a “drama with suspense,” about “four lives stuck in the routine of life, and their struggle to get out of that.”

Beck and Woods were the second Bettendorf grads in as many years to advance in “Project Greenlight,” the Matt Damon and Ben Affleck-created contest and accompanying reality show where the winners get the chance to create a big-budget feature film. Last year, Joe Otting — who now works in advertising in Chicago — made it to a final four field of directors.

While Eric Christian Olsen had the lead in last year’s “Dumb and Dumberer: When Harry Met Lloyd,” and has two films coming out before the end of the year, other Bettendorf grads are settling in on the other side of the camera.

John Barker has been back to Bettendorf for the past two summers working on the movie “Iowa Boys,” but even his friends aren’t sure of its status.

“He always avoids the question when we ask him,” Beck said.

These former Bettendorf students are making their instructors proud.

“I’m so happy for them, that they’re able to follow their dreams and accomplish and be recognized for their accomplishments,” Hegeman said. “There’s just nothing better.”

Quad Cities filmmakers hope for 'Greenlight'

By Jeffrey Bruner / DES MOINES REGISTER / May 13, 2004

Two 19-year-olds from the Quad Cities have fared well in the "Project Greenlight" competition, the contest that Matt Damon and Ben Affleck are running to find budding screenwriters and directors.

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods made the Top 50 in the directing part of the contest for their three-minute short film "Amber." They were to learn Wednesday night if they made the top 10.

"We certainly exceeded our expectations," Beck said. "Bryan and I thought about entering the 'Greenlight' competition last year but we didn't do it because we didn't like the idea."

Can't blame the guys for their reluctant entry - the contest doesn't have much of a track record. The first film, "Stolen Summer," got no support from sponsor Miramax and grossed \$120,000 on 13 screens. Last year's "The Battle of Shaker Heights" earned about \$280,000.

But pragmatism got the best of them.

"There's a lot of opportunities out there, so you might as well take whatever you can get," he said.

"Amber" was shot Jan. 31 and edited in 24 hours, which was good because entries were due the first week in February. The film uses characters from a full-length feature called "University Heights" that Beck and Woods plan to screen in the Quad Cities in late June and submit to festivals for consideration.

The "Project Greenlight" finalists will get a three-page script that's pretty much nonsense - you know, like "Kangaroo Jack" - and try to make sense of it through storytelling.

The directing winner will get \$1 million to film the top screenplay. That's not a huge amount of money these days, but when you see what Iowa guy Peter Hedges did with less than half of that for "Pieces of April," anything becomes possible.

Iowa guys get movie greenlight

By Kate Bullen / THE DAILY IOWAN / May 13, 2004

It only takes one film to make stars out of the unknowns. It worked for Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, who became celebrities with *Good Will Hunting*, starring in a film with script they had written. Now first-year UI student Scott Beck and Bryan Woods are hoping to do the same.

Beck and Woods, a student at Scott Community College in Bettendorf, put together one of 1,700 submissions to Affleck's and Damon's Project Greenlight. According to the website www.projectgreenlight.com, Damon and Affleck started the contest in 2000 to give aspiring screenwriters a chance at fame. The 2001 event added a category for directing, in which Beck and Woods entered a three-minute scene titled "Amber," a story of a man struggling to find his life's direction.

Beck and Woods have been making movies together since sixth grade.

"We're sort of like the Coen brothers or the Farrelly brothers, except we're not related," Beck said. "In the past three years, we have come an extremely long way and have improved 1,000 percent. During our sophomore year [in high school], we became more serious about filmmaking and created a name for ourselves - Bluebox Limited." Information about the pair's films can be found at www.blueboxlimited.com, including the pair's newest one, *University Heights*, which will premiere June 26 in Davenport's Adler Theatre.

Following "Amber," Beck and Woods were required to make a biography video for the next round of competition.

"Most of the contestants have just set up a camera and filmed themselves talking," Beck said. "Bryan and I worked on several concepts." Ultimately, the video demonstrated the pair's varied shooting style, using several camera-handling techniques.

"We figured it was a long shot to get in the Top 50 and that our journey was over. We were happy enough placing in the Top 250," Beck said of the biography-video submission. On April 27, at 6 p.m., however, Beck found out that he and Woods had made it to the Top 50.

"I got several phone calls back to back from my friends, and my parents were going crazy," said Beck. "It is so incredible to make it to this point, and even if Bryan and I don't progress any further, we feel very satisfied. Our main priority is to create films that entertain but are thought-provoking, smart, and fun. Our goal in filmmaking is to get our films seen by mass audiences."

The Top 10 finalists were announced Wednesday night. The final level consists of interviews in Los Angeles with the panel of judges, including Affleck and Damon. The winner of this round will have her or his film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

Hollywood pays a call to two Q-C 'directors'

By **Rachelle Treiber** / QUAD-CITY TIMES / April 30, 2004

Using action figures and their parents' basements, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods of Bettendorf began making films in grade school.

In high school, they were still in the basements, shooting low-budget films and paying friends with pizza in return for being their actors.

Now both college freshmen, the Bettendorf High School grads have stepped it up a notch, and they're seeing years of hard work recognized — by Hollywood.

"We got a call earlier this week and they said we placed in the Project Greenlight Top 50 Directors Competition," Beck said.

"At this point, we represent three percent of the total competitors," Beck said. "The top 50 was narrowed down from the top 250, which were chosen out of over 1,700 submissions."

For the first round of the contest, Beck and Woods wrote, directed and shot a three-minute scene titled "Amber." Then they created a three-minute biography video, which placed in the Top 50.

The winner gets a three-picture deal with the Miramax film studio, and the making of the first film is followed by Bravo broadcasting it to a potential audience of 75 million homes.

Beck and Woods are not the only Bettendorf High School graduates to gain Project Greenlight distinction. Joe Otting, a member of the BHS class of 1992, made it all the way to the top four in last year's competition.

Otting's film used a split-screen method, which had two aspects of his personality arguing at a conference table. Although he did not win, his work so impressed Damon that the actor offered him a chance to direct a film.

As for Beck, he said "Amber" was a piece that took a lot of thinking and "a lot of hard work."

"It's about a man who wakes up from a nightmare and he looks in the mirror and starts hearing voices," he said. The man ends up struggling with a multiple-personality disorder.

Local actors Travis Shepherd from Bettendorf and Justin Marxen from Davenport were in the film's cast.

"We didn't even have to give them food this time," Beck said with a laugh.

To date, he and Woods have written, directed and produced 11 short films and two feature-length films. Their three most recent productions, "Yearbook," "Prism" and "Remembering

November,” have won five awards at national film festivals as well as the Iowa Motion Picture Association.

Although Beck now attends the University of Iowa and Woods is going to Scott Community College, the two expect to spend one more year at their current schools before heading to Los Angeles to attend the UCLA film school together.

The duo, who have been friends since sixth grade, said they are thrilled to have gotten this far.

“It’s incredible. We definitely didn’t expect to this,” Beck said. “There are some much more experienced filmmakers in there.”

For now, they are juggling post-production on another film, getting ready for their college final exams and waiting for a May 12 telephone call listing Project Greenlight’s top 10.

“We had to fill out an 18-page background check, and then our scene submission ‘Amber,’ as well as our three-minute director’s biography video, will be reviewed again,” Woods said.

If they make it to the contest finals, they will be heading to Los Angeles for an interview with Damon and Affleck.

Beck and Woods said they shared their excitement with their parents, in whose basements they have spent so much time.

“My parents are excited. They were right there jumping up and down when they found out,” Beck said. “They have invested their own money on my equipment, at least a couple grand, and I’m so grateful to them for their support.”

One day, he hopes to repay them.

“My dad keeps saying he wants a Malibu beach house,” Beck said.

Bluebox Limited duo in running for prestigious prize

By Julie Jensen / MOLINE DISPATCH / April 4, 2004

Two college freshman from Bettendorf have made it into the top 250 semi-finalists in a national competition sponsored by LivePlanet and Miramax. If they make it through to the top 50, the top 10, and the top four to first place, they'll have the chance to create an independent film with a \$1 million budget and sign a three-picture deal with the studio.

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods of Bluebox Limited created their three-minute entry of a "director scene" in 24 hours, and Mr. Beck said, "Winning was a shock to us, but we will try to do the best we can."

The Project Green Light competition was started three years ago by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, and placing in any of the rounds is not only a great honor, but a real career boost.

Their entry is titled "Amber," Mr. Beck said, "A man wakes up in the middle of the night in a nightmare and looks at himself in the mirror. He is struggling with his wife, and it cuts to a flashback where he is dealing with a multiple-personality disorder."

The scene is dark and dreary, and Mr. Beck said, "We used a lot of lights that were amber-colored, and we had to finish it with a title, so we called it 'Amber.' It's really difficult to conceive of something that will put a message across in that amount of time."

They shared the directing, lighting and editing duties equally.

The deadline came at a busy time for them, as they were shooting their third full-length film, "University Heights," which will premiere at the Adler Theatre, Davenport, in late June.

Bluebox Limited has made 11 short films, and "University Heights" will be the third full-length picture. The others are "For Always" and "Lost and Found," and both are playing at the Cedar Rapids film festival this weekend.

"University Heights" is a story of four lives on a college campus. It takes place in a few days and delves into their pasts. Each has struggled with problems, and it shows how they deal with their future and where they are headed.

"It has some controversial issues - drugs, sexuality and racism - but it addresses them," Mr. Beck said.

The two met when they were sixth-graders at Bettendorf's Middle School. That's when they started making movies with Camcorders. They started Bluebox Limited in 2001, and Mr. Beck said, "We've been working together for almost eight years."

Mr. Beck is a cinema major at the University of Iowa, and Mr. Woods is at Scott Community College. Mr. Beck said, "I'll stay at Iowa for one more year and then go to California for my junior and senior years - probably at UCLA.

"Right now, Bryan and I have to send in a biography video to the contest. They will narrow the winners to 50, then review the biography video and scene together to arrive at the top 10. They'll choose the top four the second week in June, and the final winner will be announced in July.

"If you make it into the top 10, you get to market yourself, flying to L.A. to do interviews. You are definitely going places, whether you win the competition or not. We'll find out whether we are in the top 50 on April 27, but I'm happy enough with what we've got.

The future looks bright for these young men. They have more than a foothold on a profession that's tough to crack at an age when most people haven't even decided what they want to do when they grow up.

UI freshmen follows cinematic dreams

By Deanna Truman-Cook / IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN / January 12, 2004

A University of Iowa freshman has high hopes of becoming a filmmaker. And the 19-year-old isn't wasting any time getting started.

Having already directed and produced a dozen short films, Scott Beck is now on his 13th, titled "University Heights."

The Quad City native is shooting it primarily in Iowa City with friend Bryan Woods, 19.

If all goes well, Beck will premiere the film in May. He plans to begin the heavy part of the shooting late this month. He finished the script in November and has since recruited a cast of more than 60 who will work for free.

"Even though it is a low-budget film, I feel it is a piece of art that should really be made," he said.

The film that Beck describes as "a suspense thriller" is set in modern day at a Midwest campus similar in size to the University of Iowa.

It tells the tale of four lives on a college campus - an instructor consumed by guilt, a teacher angered by love, a troubled teen and a student unsure of his future.

"It is about human emotions," Beck said. "It is really more a study of characters more than anything."

Woods agreed.

"It just kind of explores real people and what they are about," he said.

Beck has been making films of some sort ever since he can remember. He just picked up his father's video camera and shot everything he could.

He got serious about filmmaking when he entered high school. He and Woods took as many film classes as they could all the while learning just as much outside the classroom.

They worked on films every chance they got and read everything they could get their hands on about the filmmaking process.

The pair has several awards underneath their belts. Most recently they won the Award of Achievement for "Remembering November" and the Award of Excellence for "Prism" at the 2003 Iowa Motion Picture Association.

They formed their own film company two years ago - Bluebox Limited - as a way to further their films.

While in college, they plan to make several films in Iowa City and the Quad Cities. Woods attends Scott Community College in Bettendorf.

Together they have close to \$10,000 in film equipment. They have been dipping in to their savings and getting help from family members to make their films

The pair isn't planning on staying in Iowa for long. After they have all their general education requirements in, they are heading to California.

They plan to get internships and see what happens from there. If they will finish college is up in the air.

"We will see what happens," Beck said.

With 'Always,' Bluebox advances to next level

By Linda Cook / QUAD-CITY TIMES / January 8, 2004

Bluebox Productions has returned with "For Always," a blend of drama and whodunit.

Moving back and forth from the characters' pasts to their present states, the movie — often challenging to follow because of the non-linear method in which the plot unfolds — features outstanding camera work.

The movie, which begins with quotes from filmmakers Alfred Hitchcock and M. Night Shyamalan, focuses on Andrew (Ian Klink), a young man who seems to have lost everything. His parents were homicide victims, and now Andrew has lost his girlfriend, too — in fact, he calls a teen hotline because he's so depressed. "Natalie was all I had left," he says.

When he receives an unsigned letter and some Polaroid photos in the mail, he is shocked to discover that the pictures seem to be depictions of the result of some violent acts. He shows them to his friend, Anthony (Tristan Layne Tapscott), who encourages him to do some detective work and find out who has been harmed, and why. Andrew says that the photos remind him of when he discovered that his parents had been slain.

Anthony tells Andrew that he needs to mourn. "You need to mourn. You need to be sad. It's going to hurt now but it'll help later," he advises.

In the meantime, another student, David (Jeff Voss), also seems to be at a loss. The audience sees that David, too, has been involved in some kind of violence in a wooded area.

Filmmakers Scott Beck and Bryan Woods were in high school (they're both in college now) when they began Bluebox Limited. They have written, directed and produced more than a dozen movies, many of them short films, and they have won awards for their talent.

They're best known for being technically adept, and they take their camera work to a new level in this movie, with nice shots utilizing reflective surfaces, a moving ceiling fan, and a nifty shot of school lockers.

Bluebox fans won't want to miss the latest project. And they'll be happy to know that another Bluebox production is scheduled to be released in May.

Discover local "lost/found"

By Linda Cook / QUAD-CITY TIMES / September 11, 2003

Hey — don't wander off before you have a chance to see "lost/found," the latest drama from local filmmakers Bluebox Limited.

I've been blessed by the friendship of one of the actors, Susan McPeters of WQPT-TV, who's had approximately 1 zillion appearances in local stage productions (We go back so far that, one day when someone asked us where we met, neither one of us could remember. Seriously). Because I have a close friend in this production, I'm omitting a star rating, which could be misinterpreted as bias. What I will do is tell you about the movie and its young filmmakers.

Bluebox Limited started two years ago when Scott Beck and Bryan Woods were in high school (they're both freshmen in college now). The two have written, directed and produced 11 short films and two feature length films that have earned awards. Each of their movies has become more professional as Beck and Woods hone their filmmaking talent.

Their latest drama centers on a lonely writer, Keith Johnson (Justin Marxen), who doesn't think there's any reason for his existence. His parents were killed in a plane crash when Keith was a kid. He doesn't remember the last time he had a best friend, and he's never had a date. He has shut himself off from other people because he doesn't think he can relate to them.

He does, however, make daily visits to a park bench. "I go out to the park every day to observe," he says — he's collecting material for his writing.

One day, his phone rings. And the caller asks him a single question before he hangs up: "Are you happy in your isolation?" Then, one day as he writes his observations, the appearance of a stranger leads him to connect with a variety of other people who need Keith in a variety of ways. You'll recognize lots of local spots that create the perfect background for various scenes, and of course you'll see a lot of familiar faces in the cast. Two of the young actors, Kenny Lue as Paul and Travis Shepherd as Jordan, are particularly outstanding — they're naturals in front of the camera, which, by the way, Beck has developed quite a knack for handling.

There's talent right here in River City. "Talent" — that starts with a "T" and that rhymes with "B" and that stands for ... "Bluebox."

Looking inside Bluebox and seeing top local filmmakers

By Sean Leary / MOLINE DISPATCH / August 2003

The next Steven Spielberg or George Lucas could be shopping -- or even bagging your groceries -- at Hy-Vee right now.

After all, the creators behind the local film company Bluebox Limited are just area high school and college students at this point. However, they're destined for great things in the world of cinema. Based on their talent level at such young ages, I have the utmost confidence that these guys are going places -- and sooner rather than later.

I've been somewhat familiar with a lot of the actors and filmmakers involved with the group for a while. Many of them have been in high school and local theater productions and, ergo, many of them have been mentioned in these pages. However, I hadn't actually seen any of the Bluebox works until earlier this year.

Max Collins asked me to be a judge for the Iowa Film Awards and as such, I spent a long Saturday this spring in Muscatine, watching a bunch of regional features and shorts. Some of them were pretty brutal. But in the midst of the pile were a couple of pictures called "Prism" and "Remembering November." They stood out so far and away from most of the rest of the pack that it was a no-brainer for me to vote for them to grab the top honors. The other judges concurred and "November" took home the Award of Achievement and "Prism" the Award of Excellence -- two of the top three trophies in their category.

"Prism" and "November" were absolutely amazing, especially when you considered these films were being made by kids in or just out of high school. They both looked terrific -- the technical aspects of them were incredibly slick for "amateur" filmmakers. The acting and direction also were surprisingly mature.

However, there were two things that really stood out even beyond those obvious surface advantages: the intelligence and imagination of the scripts and the earnest effort and ambition of the filmmakers.

Part of my job is to review films and as such, every year I see dozens of new movies -- from low-budget indies to mammoth Hollywood blockbusters. Many of them are depressingly formulaic and devoid of entertainment value. For all the millions that are thrown up on screen to make everything look sharp, it's sad that so little effort is put into the most important aspect of any film -- the story.

I can safely say "Prism" and "November" are well represented in that respect. Sure, they've got their formulaic aspects. Almost all films do. But there's a genuine effort on the part of

screenwriters Bryan Woods ("Prism") and Scott Beck ("November") to present interesting ideas within a compelling and well-written plotline, and they succeed in doing so.

"Prism" is in the vein of the classic film "Memento." A lonely man (Justin Marxen) tries to solve the mystery surrounding his wife's murder. As he begins piecing together clues, he stumbles across a deeper and more disturbing truth than he imagined.

"Remembering November" is reminiscent of "Vanilla Sky" in how it mixes drama and science-fiction and throws its concept of reality into strange spins. In it, a college student (Tristan Layne Tapscott) finds himself interning for a creepy corporation called Winston Technologies. After having his curiosity stoked by various oddities of the job and office, he investigates the sinister secrets of the company and winds up in an "X-Files" style conspiracy.

Both movies wear their influences on their sleeves, which is a typical trait of works by young artists. But the good thing is the filmmakers have excellent taste (i.e. they're cribbing from the right people) and the talent to bring their vision to fruition. By emulating the positives of their influences and adding their own touches they're building for what I believe will be a promising future.

But don't just take my word for it. See for yourself. Both "Prism" and "November" will be presented at various times Thursday through Saturday at the Q-C Brew and View, 1611 2nd Ave., Rock Island. Call 788-8439 or log on to www.qcbrewandview.com for show times. You also can buy the videos online at www.blueboxlimited.com. I think you'll be impressed. I certainly was.

And someday when they're accepting their Oscars, you can say you knew them when ...

Local film worth remembering

By Amanda Augsburger / BLACK HAWK CHIEFTAIN / December 2002

Bluebox Limited premiered their latest release, "Remembering November" Friday, November 22nd. The premiere brought over 200 people to North Scott High School in Eldridge. The film is a local production, starring Black Hawk College student, Tristan Layne Tapscott.

"Remembering November" is a well-written screenplay, by Scott Beck, who also directed the movie. The film leaves the audience with a sense of wonder, that most films lack today. It keeps the audience guessing.

The twists and turns of the plot are enhanced by the production. The movie has a similar feel to recent independent films such as "Memento" and "Requiem for a Dream." Credit for the production of the film goes to Bryan Woods.

Tapscott was joined by Dan McGinn, Ashley Brummitt, and Lucas Anderson. Tapscott held the cast together, keeping the pace of the film from falling behind. His expressions outplayed his words, proving that acting is beyond just what is said.

The film is available on VHS tapes from Bluebox Limited. There is additional information about the film and Bluebox Limited at www.blueboxlimited.com.

Bettendorf Teens host the premiere of their 2 movies

By Elaine Barreca / QUAD-CITY TIMES / November 23, 2002

Two nights ago, Scott Beck has a bad dream: nobody showed up at the premiere of the latest Bluebox Limited independent films "Prism" and "Remembering November."

But like the main character in the Hitchcock-like "Prism" comes to understand, when you wake up, you could see things differently.

About 200 people attended the premiere Friday night at North Scott High School.

"A year ago, who would have thought that people would actually want to see our movies on the big screen?" Beck humbly told the crowd before the show began.

"This is awesome," said Bryan Woods, Beck's partner in Bluebox Limited.

Woods and Beck, seniors at Bettendorf High School, are the founders of the production studio located in their parents' homes. "Yearbook," their film about teenage drinking and driving, has won three awards.

At North Scott, the mix of teenagers, parents and other well-wishers chatted in the lobby before the premiere, many making free-will donations to the company.

"They're trying to make their dreams come true," said Maggie Miller, whose son is involved in drama at North Scott. "It's a big endeavour, but go for it," she said.

The school's drama club, Lancer Productions, sponsored the premiere, which allowed the students to use the auditorium at no charge.

"When you have no-budget movies like Bluebox does, you have to take all the freebies you can get," Beck said.

The suspense-thriller "Prism" revolved around the lonely character, William Kennedy, whose wife recently was murdered. Woods directed "Prism" with a budget of \$50. It was filmed at St. John's United Methodist Church in Davenport, Terracon Consultants, Inc., Bettendorf, and in his parent's home.

"Remembering November," directed and written by Beck, boasts a larger budget at \$467. It was shot in the Abbey Hotel, and Novel Cafe in Bettendorf, Augustana College, LeClaire Park, Terracon Consultants, Inc., and at the side of a highway in McCausland, Iowa. The main character, Jeff Collins, is a college student who comes across a new corporation, Winston

Technologies, which is offering internships. Once accepted, he soon finds himself in a situation deeper than he could have imagined.

Both digital films will be submitted to various film festivals.

You can learn more about both of the movies, future productions, and the studio at www.blueboxlimited.com.

BHS Students will premiere independent films

By Rachelle Treiber / BETTENDORF NEWS / November 21, 2002

Bettendorf High School seniors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods will hold a premiere for two recently produced independent films, "Remembering November" and "Prism," at 7:30 p.m. on Friday.

The screening will be held at the North Scott High School theater, 200 S. 1st St., Eldridge, Iowa. Admission will be free, but donations will be accepted. Beck and Woods wrote, directed, and produced the films with their production company Bluebox Limited.

A previous Bluebox film titled "Yearbook" was selected along with twenty other independent films for screening at the 2002 Rewind International Media Festival in July in South Dakota

The Iowa Motion Picture Association selected "Yearbook" as the Best Student Film in the High School category and honored the film with its Award of Excellence, which was given to 36 of the 95 entries.

At Friday's premiere, the film "Prism" will be shown first, beginning around 7:45 p.m. According to Bluebox's Web site, www.blueboxlimited.com, "Prism" is a 20-minute film that tells the story of a lonely young man who recently lost his wife to a homicide.

The site says, "one day he wakes up and begins seeing this differently - finding the answers before he comes across the questions."

The other film, which will premiere at 8:30 p.m., is "Remembering November." The site says this film is "a story of life, individual happiness, and the decisions that we make which can change the course of our existence."

Seating will be on a first come, first serve basis. Posters, VHS and DVD copies of the film will be available.

Popcorn will be available and a meet and greet session will follow the premiere of both films.

Movie to debut at North Scott

By Tracy Dunn / NORTH SCOTT PRESS / November 20, 2002

While many teen-agers spend their weekends watching movies, two North Scott students have spent much of their free time in recent months in front of the camera. Now, the public will have a chance to see the acting abilities of Ben Dau and Ian Klink. The premiere of "Prism" will be this Friday, Nov. 22, at North Scott's Fine Arts Auditorium.

"Prism," which features Klink and Dau in a cast of just seven, was produced by Bluebox Limited, an independent film company owned by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods. Beck and Woods are seniors at Bettendorf High School who have been involved in film making for about two years. The pair met in the sixth grade and began creating stop-motion videos. They have written, produced, directed and acted in dozens of films, including "Yearbook," shot in 2001, which discourages drinking and driving and has won several awards.

Klink became acquainted with Beck and Woods when the three worked on the crew of "Iowa Boys," another independent film. Woods called Klink when he was looking to cast "Prism." Dau says he knew Beck before being cast in the film.

"Prism" revolves around a lonely young man, William, whose wife was recently murdered. Searching for clues, the man seeks help from his friend, Steven, played by Dau.

"Steven is a pastor who had been friends with William," says Dau. "He's not sure he wants to help William, because he had basically stolen from the church, but he ends up helping him in the end."

Klink plays Mr. Marshall, "the boss with a bad side," explains the actor. Marshall is William's superior and winds up with a pivotal role in the story.

For Dau and Klink, the experience of acting in a film has been a positive one. They spent about four days on weekends to complete the 45-minute movie, shooting all the scenes on location. Part of the movie was shot at Klink's church, St. John United Methodist Church in Davenport, where his father serves as pastor.

"I enjoyed it," says Dau, "I'd definitely do it again."

"It was a blast for me," adds Klink. "For someone who's watched movies his whole life, to actually be in one, well, there are no words. It was amazing."

Both young men hope to pursue careers in the arts. Klink, a senior, plans to study film arts. His goal is to be a director. At North Scott, he is involved in Lancer Productions, choir, band, speech and North Scott News. He is the son of Margaret and Charles Klink of Bettendorf.

Dau, the son of Mike and Pam Dau of Eldridge, is a junior. He is in Lancer Productions and choir, and dances with the North Scott Silver Shakers. He hopes to pursue a career in acting and dancing, and possibly arts management.

Friday evening, a second film by Bluebox Limited, "Remembering November," also will be debuted. The curtain goes up at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free, but donations are welcome, and popcorn will be available.

Student film company readies latest offerings

By Lindsay Bjerregaard / BETTENDORF HIGH SCHOOL GROWL / September 20, 2002

Bluebox Limited, the student film company created by Scott Beck, '03, and Bryan Woods, '03, has been busy this summer filming and contributing to a number of projects.

Beck and Woods just finished working on "Iowa Boys," a movie co-produced by John Barker and Mac Smith, which is about a group of friends who grew up in Iowa. Beck first heard about the film when the reporter who wrote the article on Bluebox Limited for the Quad City Times did a story on Barker, and she told Beck how to contact him.

Beck sent him an e-mail to Barker, but when he didn't get a response, he decided to go to the auditions for "Iowa Boys" being held at the Bettendorf Public Library. Beck introduced himself and told Barker that he was interested in working on the film, and he and Woods both got jobs working on the film. Woods worked the clapboard (which tells which camera shot is being filmed for editing use later) and Beck logged time codes for the cameras and actually ran the cameras for about four days.

In total, Beck and Woods spent about 90 hours working on the film, and their longest day was from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., but the latest time they filmed was about 12:30 at night.

Scott Beck is currently filming a movie called "Remembering November." It's a story of life, individual happiness, and the decisions that we make, which can change the course of our existence. The main character, Jeff Collins (Tristan Layne Tapscott), is a college student who comes across a new corporation called Winston Technologies, which is offering internships. Once accepted, he slowly finds himself involved in a situation deeper than he could have ever imagined. Throughout the story, the world is revealed to Jeff to be a completely different place than what he has come to believe. The film also stars BHS alumni Lucas Anderson '98, Dan McGinn '02, and BHS student Ashley Brummitt '03.

Beck plans to have a premiere party for "Remembering November" at the Quad City Music Guild, but further details have yet to be announced. Aside from everything else he has been working on this summer, Bryan Woods is writing a script for another film, "Prism", which he plans to start shooting at the end of September. Woods and Beck also plan to start another project sometime soon, called "The Six Degrees of Life", which takes six aspects of life, including tragedy, happiness, love, and fame, and tells a short story about each. Beck would also like to make a psychological thriller involving downtown Chicago and the middle of nowhere in Iowa.

The process involved in making Bluebox Limited's films is fairly complex.

"First we brainstorm. We think of an inventive story, the end, the purpose, and effect on the audience. Then we take notes and collect ideas, write the screenplay, break down the script, and find locations, cast, crew, etc," said Beck. "After that we start scheduling filming dates and we start filming. Then we do editing, sound work, get a final copy, distribute it, and do publicity."

Making films can also be costly. According to Beck, making films didn't cost anything at the start because they used what they had, but after buying new equipment, editing programs, computers, and props, the total cost for their films so far has been about \$6,000.

All the hard work and money put into the films has started to pay off, however. Bluebox Limited has won numerous awards and recognitions, including Best Student Film from the Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival and Best Student Film from the Iowa Motion Picture Association. Bluebox Limited was also won Rookie of the Year Award and was nominated for Best Editing, Best Original Music, and Best Short Film from the Rewind International Film Festival.

"Both Bryan and Scott think in the language of film. They always saw beyond what was required in T.V. Tech, and they put a lot of work into it. Somebody that eats, sleeps, and dreams filmmaking will make it in the business, and they do," said Mrs. Hegeman, the T.V. Tech teacher at BHS.

For more information about Bluebox Limited and its projects, visit <http://www.blueboxlimited.com>.

Review: "Yearbook"

By John Simpson / Go-AMDB.com / November 2001

When I was asked to review "Yearbook", the very high profile movie from Bluebox Limited, I felt very honored. In high school, I was vice president of my local S.A.D.D. chapter my junior year and president in my senior year...so the subject is very near and dear to me. If you don't know the premise of Yearbook by now, it's about the consequences of drinking and driving.

Yearbook is a well executed movie, and I'm sure it will provide a good resource for any S.A.D.D. or M.A.D.D. chapter. It has a good purpose. The only instance where the movie suffers is in the voice over that pops up every so often, including the beginning and ending of the movie. The dialog is spoken in character and delivered well, but quite softly--an easy fix. Of course, I'm not the one to nitpick a movie for easily fixed problems. As for the rest of the movie, it is delivered in an interesting way. I don't know the technical jargon filmmakers use, but the action in Yearbook jumps back in time throughout the movie to show the action through different people's perspectives in order to provide the viewer with more information. The concept worked well in this format.

The acting is passable, and actually better than most movies that are made to inform and persuade people P.S.A. style. I cared about the characters even in the short time they were on camera.

Bryan Woods and Scott Beck have delivered a very thought-provoking short--which is precisely why they made the movie. I'd like to congratulate them on a job well done. Let's hope this movie gets out to more people so they can get something out of it.

Teens' film project provides a model for all of us

QUAD-CITY TIMES EDITORIAL / November 2001

Scott Beck and Bryan Woods are two Bettendorf High School juniors who like to make films. In fact, they've made more than a dozen of them, with the help of a large group of friends.

Now they're wrapping up their latest production, called "Yearbook." If you're thinking it's probably a shadowy video that caters to teens' superficial or selfish interests, you would be wrong. Very wrong.

"We wanted to make a film with a purpose, and we thought a movie about teen-agers — from teen-agers — would be different," Woods says.

The movie's target audience is teens, but adults also would do well to heed its message. "Yearbook" is a 20-minute film that follows the lives of four teen-agers and their experiences with the repercussions of drinking and driving. The catalyst for the project was the death of an 11-year-old East Moline girl in an alcohol-related crash last April.

While the lessons of "Yearbook" are important, the young filmmakers also provide an impressive model for their peers, as well as adults. Beck and Woods financed this project on their own and borrowed lighting equipment from Beck's grandfather, who has worked in the California film industry. They hope organizations such as Students Against Drunk Driving, or SADD, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, or MADD, will consider using the film in their campaigns.

So do we.

Largely because of education efforts, the number of alcohol-related traffic deaths declined about 30 percent in the past decade. Yet traffic accidents remain the leading cause of death among people ages 15-24 in all states, and alcohol is involved in about half of the them — whether the driver is a teen or an adult.

That's not acceptable. We must reduce the fatality rate even faster.

And with the help of talented, dedicated young people such as Bryan Woods, Scott Beck and their friends, we will.

Bettendorf High School students make film

By **Rachelle Treiber / QUAD-CITY TIMES / November 26, 2001**

During the day, they are busy with high school.

But in the evening, they change hats to work as filmmakers, creating dozens of independent films while spending countless hours and their own dollars creating projects with a higher purpose.

And now the filmmakers, Bettendorf High School juniors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, are putting the finishing touches on perhaps their most important production to date, a 15- to 20-minute, nonprofit film titled "Yearbook."

The film follows the lives of four teen-agers and shows the repercussions of drinking and driving through each point of view.

"We wanted to make a film with a purpose and we thought a movie about teen-agers — from teen-agers — would be different," Woods said.

Woods and Beck, along with a large group of dedicated friends and siblings, act as writers, directors, producers, actors and editors while juggling a shooting schedule around homework, after-school activities and curfews.

"It's a tough schedule. It's difficult to arrange the main characters and extras when we are working around studying, sports and curfews," Beck said.

In addition to their other roles, the 17-year-olds also run a production studio called Bluebox Limited and maintain an extensive Web site where visitors can view trailers and read about each film, purchase items from a gift shop and check dates for future production schedules.

Most of the films they make are fictional and are meant to serve a higher purpose of education regarding issues that affect teen-agers.

They hope to show "Yearbook" to organizations such as Students Against Drunk Driving, or SADD, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, or MADD, as well as anyone else who could benefit from the film.

"We want to show it to the SADD and MADD clubs with the hopes of raising the issue. We would like to have SADD groups play it regionally and nationally," Beck said. In addition, they plan to send "Yearbook" to an independent film festival in South Dakota.

The teens said they did not decide to make the film until early September, but the problem of youth drinking and driving came to their attention months earlier.

“In April, someone from Pleasant Valley was involved in an alcohol-related car crash. It made us think,” Beck said, referring to a single-vehicle accident on Valley Drive in Bettendorf in which an 11-year-old East Moline girl was killed.

He began to write the script with Woods’ assistance and they began filming in early October.

When filming most shots, two cameras are used simultaneously in order to maintain continuity and shorten the time it takes to film each scene. “We use Sony digital cameras because it’s the wave of the independent film-making future,” Beck said.

The two have come a long way since their early days in grade school, when Beck and Woods first began making films together.

“We used our action figures for the films then,” Woods said, laughing.

“We started with a few minutes per film and our longest is now 53 minutes,” Beck said.

Although the 11-page “Yearbook” script was relatively lengthy, Beck said the actors ad-libbed to give their parts a more natural, teen-age feel.

To keep things as realistic as possible, fake cigarettes and beer bottles with apple juice were used. Beck and Woods even searched the Internet for fake cigarettes to use in the party scenes. “It did not even resemble real smoke, but it worked,” Woods said.

The lighting equipment used on the film belongs to Beck’s grandfather, who worked in the film industry in California. “We just had it in our basement,” he said.

The film, which uses flashbacks in order to “make people think more,” Wood said, features original music by a 23-year-old Kentucky man whose work they discovered on the Internet.

Beck said the best thing about making small-scale, independent films, is the reasonable talent fees. “We bought pizza. You just give them food and they’re happy,” he said.

They also said their parents have backed them on this and other time-consuming projects. “Our parents are very supportive. We always enjoy showing them our films first and getting their opinions,” Beck said.

V.A.D.D. Video Against Drunk Driving

By James Ehrmann / BETTENDORF HIGH SCHOOL GROWL / November 2001

Memento. Usual Suspects. Fight Club. Unbreakable.

Those are just a few of the many films that have inspired Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, both '03. Back in seventh grade they began making their own short scripted movies with their friends, but it wasn't until a year ago that things really started moving; writing more detailed scripts with more detailed dialogue.

As things progressed, they created a name for themselves - Bluebox Limited, which can be found online at <http://www.geocities.com/blueboxltd/>. Beck and Woods also spent a few thousand dollars on video equipment, including two Sony digital video cameras, microphones, a new Sony computer, and a \$600 non-linear editing program.

In their past short films they had used music from major movies, such as "The Sixth Sense." In June of 2001, they found Justin R. Durban, a 23 year old college student from Kentucky, who composed his own music for films. Credited as Edgen Animations, found at <http://www.edgen.com/>, they have used Durban's music in their past four movies. They have eight short films finished, ranging in length from 6 to 53 minutes.

Their latest is entitled, "Yearbook," and tells the stories of four teenagers and how drinking and driving affects their lives. It stars Jake Conner, '03, John Beck, '03, Kelly McConville, '02, and Ian Wiley, '03, who recently joined with Bluebox Limited. Besides playing a major role in "Yearbook", Wiley is currently working on a new script.

Both Beck and Woods plan to take the film to SADD and various other organizations, including local TV stations.

"We created 'Yearbook' as a learning tool for teenagers. Drinking and driving is not a cool thing to be doing, and that's what we want to show others," Beck says.

Yearbook began production in early September, and should be finished by mid-November.

"We want to get this movie out to as many places possible so we can show that drinking and driving doesn't affect a few people, but its impact can be felt by many," said Woods. The two hope to release it regionally to surrounding schools as well.

Both Beck and Woods plan to attend film school at USC or UCLA in Los Angeles, or Columbia in Chicago.