



LOCAL

Resident keeps it real for movie project in Texas

HORSIN' AROUND, from page 8

Films. Stanton envisions "North Starr" as just the first rung of a career ladder catered to provocative independent films.

Of course, the Holy Grail for independent filmmakers today is the annual Sundance Film Festival, staged each January in Park City, Utah. The push to meet this year's entry deadline has become a sudden driving force for Stanton after several years of intermittent work on "North Starr."

The sudden compulsion and increased sense of fortitude can be traced directly to a recent fallout with Santa Monica director Bill Slate, who had been scheduled to direct "Starr" for the better part of the past year. But after creative differences forced a parting of the ways, Stanton again found himself alone to champion his project.

In retrospect, he feels, it was the best thing that could've happened.

"I've gotten more done in the past two months than we did in a year," he said, as his rented Dodge Caravan cruised along through rattlesnake country. "I think I just got caught up in the excitement of someone wanting to make my movie ... But my progress has been validated by the strides I've made on my own."

He's quick to point out his three serious dealings with potential producers on the film project. The first, he says, told him "to give me your money." The second, "Show me the money." The third, "Just shut up and keep writing."

"I don't accept any promises anymore, except those I make to myself," he said.

According to Stanton, a major sticking



Michael J. Tittinger/Daily Press

HOW NOW: Writer and actor Matt Stanton surveys the Sand Hills Ranch from atop an old Indian lookout site in Oplin, Tex., last week.

point between he and Slate was the location of the shoot. In Stanton's eyes, the tiny town of Trublin, Tex. — bleak, suffocating, even backward — serves as a major character in the film, an uninviting universe in which hatred in all shapes comes to the fore. Slate reportedly wanted to shoot the film in Stanton's hometown of Chagrin Falls, Ohio, a somewhat trendy, rustic town on the outskirts of Cleveland.

Ironically, it was Campbell, the irrev-

erent car salesman Stanton befriended back in Ohio, who suggested Stanton film "Starr" in his old Texan stomping grounds.

"Look at this place ... this is Trublin," remarked Campbell in his western twang, cruising through the town of Clyde. "All these people, in the houses up here, they got money but you'd never know it. Appearances ... they don't give a sh__."

"That's just how they do it down here."

ROUGH CUT

With camera at the ready and an ice chest stuffed with Coors cans by the backseat, the pair maneuvered through the Texas countryside blaring the likes of Travis Tritt, Gary Allen, Kenny Chesney

and "The Three Horsemen." Scrawled in thick black marker across Campbell's CD, burned in preparation for the trip, are the words "Get 'er done," an expression he often uses that soon became a mantra for the film expedition. Stanton, by all accounts, is looking to get 'er done.

Before setting out for Texas there was a certain uneasiness amongst the pair, warranted trepidation given the fact that a black filmmaker from LA doesn't come knocking on their porch doors every day. However, the two were surprised by the warm reception they received throughout the region — people wanting to lend their services, lend use of their land, even play a role in the film.

"Going in, I thought there would be measures of resistance and tension, but what I found was to the contrary," said Stanton. "They actually made us feel at home. I haven't felt that way in awhile. I don't even feel that out here (in LA)."

The eagerness of the locals to participate should only move Stanton closer to his goal of shooting during a three-week stretch this fall, assuming he can secure the necessary investors to fund the project. The more roles manned by the locals will not only feed to the desired realism of the project, but also trim the necessity to caravan a full cast of actors from California.

Of course, those too entrenched in the Hollywood lifestyle need not apply. The filmmaker was plotting out his crew "encampment" last week on a ranch in Oplin, Tex. A shaded, deserted picnic area could very well serve as home for those willing to rough it a bit during the shoot. But, no worries, there'll be a marshy runoff pond in which to cool off from the exhaustive heat, temporary fencing to keep out the rattlers and maybe even a tent in the shade, that is if the nearby steer agree to mosey on.

Far away from Hollywood, indeed.

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