

**LOCAL**

# Filmmaker looks to buck the Hollywood system

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vehicle for himself, and a project he's been tinkering with for the better part of six years. The West Texas landscapes — rolling hills of sun-burnt brush, randomly staggered double-wide trailers and two-block stretches that earn the "downtown" moniker — are about as far removed from Hollywood as one can get, which is just fine with Stanton, whose plans for a disturbing, provoking independent film are decidedly un-Tinseltown.

"The environment is a significant element to the story, in order for it to be told truthfully," he said.

"North Starr" is the story of an inner city youth's personal growth amid preju-

dice and hatred, both tangible and seething below the surface. It follows the journey of Demetrius, who after witnessing a brutal murder in Houston, makes a b-line for San Antonio. His road to renewal, however, takes an unexpected turn in the fictional town of Trublin, a dot on the map haunted by its racially divided past.

Stanton is poised to play David, the town's lone black rancher dealing with ghosts of his own.

"I want people to climb out from behind the walls they live within," he said. "We live in so much isolation. Of course, that's comfortable, but I guess I want to challenge people to embrace differences — socially, culturally, politically."

Stanton knows the precise moment when "North Starr" was born — sitting, dog-tired on the carpet in a friend's Ohio ranch house about a decade ago. After working until 2 a.m. building horse stalls, he said he suddenly felt compelled to sit up and jot down some notes while the voice of inspiration prattled away.

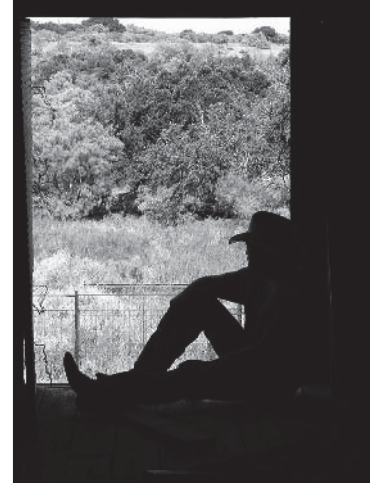
"When I told my friends I was writing a screenplay, that was the most foreign idea in the world," he laughed. "I was surprising myself. I had no intention of writing a film then ... but I'm glad I paid attention."

The lyrics of a Clint Black song, "State of Mind," served as the launching point. The opening lines, "Got a big leather suitcase, all I own's inside. Seems I've been walkin' for days, can't even bum a ride," spawned a pivotal scene in which Demetrius, fleeing Houston on a dusty country road, finally hitches a ride with the black rancher David.

"It's not something I anticipated," he said, recalling his days at a horse-breeding facility back East. "But something about that song resonated within me and planted a vision of this chaos found in 'North Starr.'"

**LOOKING FOR TRUBLIN**

The project took a major step towards fruition last week when Stanton, riding shotgun, and his buddy Wayne Campbell stormed through the towns of Campbell's youth looking for Trublin. Armed with a rented digital video camera, the pair exhaustively filmed potential locations and met with area ranchers in attempts to set the production wheels in motion, that



Michael J. Titinger/Daily Press  
**ON THE PRECIPICE:** Santa Monica resident Matt Stanton contemplates the journey ahead from a second-story hay loft in Oplim, Tex.

is, once the finances are in order. Another goal of the trip was to compile footage for a promotional trailer, as Stanton next sets out to secure the estimated \$50,000 he will need for the production of "Starr."

Not unlike his protagonist, Stanton finds himself on an uncertain path. While he has secured minor roles in both television and film, this is the first major film project that rests squarely on his 6'1" shoulders. The stakes are high, not only for the feature film, but also for his fledgling production company — Fat Bessy

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