

'Loose Change' ambitions fly from stage to screen

By Claire Charlton

Special to the Daily Tribune

Boredom is something Jeff Priskorn hasn't felt in the past nine years.

When the 34-year old Berkley resident isn't writing screenplays and producing TV comedy sketches with his partners at Berkley-based production company Loose Change Entertainment, Priskorn finds time for his true passion — filmmaking.

And, with his remaining energy, he writes songs for his rock band, and works at his day job developing computer software for film studios in Hollywood.

"I'm an all-around artistic person, I guess," answered Priskorn when asked how he would describe his livelihood. "Mainly, I'm an actor and also a producer."

Priskorn is eagerly anticipating the world premiere of his second feature film, "Love & Plutonium," at the Emagine Theater in Novi on Thursday, June 23. The film, co-written by Priskorn and his new bride Jacquie Floyd, 30, was shot locally using home-grown actors and crew in just five weekends during the fall of 2003.

Priskorn and Floyd both have supporting roles in the film, which might be described as a villain/superhero/graphic novel/romantic comedy with a twist.

In fact, there are reminders of Priskorn throughout the credits,

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as he also occupied the director's chair and wrote and performed songs for the soundtrack with his band Elixir.

While Priskorn is a self-made movie man, Floyd has been acting all of her life, enjoying the lead role of her first stage show at the tender age of 8.

"I thought 'I like this attention ... and if I can get paid for this, even better,'" Floyd said. Once she caught the acting bug, Floyd expanded to study playwriting while working toward her Bachelor's degree in Performing Arts from Oakland University.

And though the initial idea for "Love & Plutonium" was Floyd's, she consulted with then-boyfriend Priskorn for his screenwriting experience from Loose Change's first film, "Arbor Daze," which was released in 2003.

The differences between writing for stage and for screen are huge, said Floyd. "You have to be aware of what the camera sees," she said. "As opposed to writing a big wide picture, you have to write very close, tight pictures



Jeff Priskorn as Hank the Henchman and Jacquie Floyd as Little Liberty appear in the movie "Love & Plutonium."

and be really, really detailed in your stage directions in order to make the right picture."

Getting the screenplay right was the first of many challenges for Priskorn and Floyd. Independent filmmakers have the luxury of working to please themselves, rather than corporate financial backers, but that freedom has its downfalls too, said Priskorn.

"When you are writing a script, you don't want to limit yourself with your creativity but you are also thinking 'if I write this explosion scene, am I really going to be able to afford to film this?' So you really have to balance," Priskorn said.

"You have to be able to draw a middle ground and tell yourself exactly how much you're going

to spend."

For "Love & Plutonium," that was between \$15,000 and \$20,000, self-funded by Priskorn and Floyd.

It's possible such a low budget means a potential cult status for the film, and would-be followers can head to the official Web site to stock up on T-shirts, mugs,

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hats, aprons and more. For Priskorn, these memorabilia are an important tool for creating public awareness of the movie.

"We aren't content to just make a movie and let it sit there," said Priskorn. "We know it's all about self-promotion, because nobody is going to do it for us."

That's where Emagine Theater comes in. Emagine's reputation for supporting local filmmakers is equally important to its capability to project from digital media, Priskorn said.

"We do quite a few independent films here," said Aaron Wesener, manager at Emagine.

"As an entertainment complex, we like to offer a little bit more to our customers and that includes giving the chance for independent filmmakers to put their work on the screen."

New to the Novi cinema, Wesener is surprised by the number of quality independent films in the Detroit metro area.

"Here we get one a month, sometimes even more," he said.

In a country that does so little to cultivate original artistic voices, it is refreshing to see filmmakers use southeast Michigan to make universal statements and create cultural commentary, said Joel Silvers, instructor in the Department of Communications at Wayne State University.

"We're all sick of films made in Hollywood and Manhattan," said Silvers.

"It is exciting to have people creating locally-produced regional films, and there are many of them coming out of the woodwork."

It might just be that the affordability of digital recording and home editing is making filmmaking an activity of the masses, said Jack Cronin, director of the Detroit Film Theatre.

"Good work, when it is good, now can come from a wide variety of people," he said. "Ultimately, that is a good thing for everybody."