

# Hello, Cleveland... Bristol filmmaker is on her way

By MIKE CHAIKEN  
EDITIONS EDITOR

A filmmaker from Bristol will be making a splash this weekend in Cleveland.

Sarah Elizabeth (professionally known as Sarah E.), the driving force behind Hells Bells Production, will be screening her documentary, "SWAN Day CT" at the Indie Gathering International Film Festival in Cleveland.

The film also has been selected for the International Film Festival Ireland in Tipperary, Ireland in September.

The documentary follows the 2009 installment of SWAN Day, which is organized each year by Bristol musician Jennifer Hill. The festival features female artists of all kinds.

"This will be my first time at The Indie Gathering," said Sarah in an email interview. "I was thrilled to find out that it had been selected to screen at their next festival... and that it would be receiving an honorable mention award."

Sarah said selection for the festival is a big deal for

an independent filmmaker such as herself. "It's considered to be one of the top 25 in terms of networking in the film industry. So if I could show this film to any representatives from any major distributors or networks that would be my ideal goal. I would like to get this film out to the general public."

Sarah said the film had its premiere on June 18 at the Lutz Children's Museum in Manchester. At the debut, said Sarah, "Everyone who was there that evening had nothing but good things to say about it."

The production of "SWAN CT 2009" was set into motion when Sarah had seen a photo album of a previous installment of the festival. "When I saw what it was all about (it celebrates women artists), I wanted to get involved somehow. So, as a filmmaker, I started thinking about how I could fit in, and at that point it seemed obvious to me that I should make a documentary."

Initially, Sarah figured the film would be a straight forward documentary fea-

turing interviews with the artists and shots of Hill prepping for the event.

Sarah said, as the filming went underway, she found the documentary straying from that template... for the better.

"The entire project of getting this show off the ground was filled with drama and several surprises from the very beginning. And the show turned out to be the celebration that brought it all together," said Sarah. "It turned out to be a very engaging and inspiring documentary."

Sarah is a product of Bristol schools having attended Immanuel Lutheran School until eighth grade and then moving on to St. Paul Catholic High School, where she graduated.

Sarah's love for film-making can be traced to the time she spent with her grandfather when she was growing up. "My grandfather... got me into storytelling. When I was around 4-years-old, he and I would sit out in the backyard and just tell stories, made up from the top of our heads... I think it's because of that



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A screenshot from 'SWAN Day CT' of Jennifer Hill and Co. performing while artist Kerry Kozaczuk paints.

that I've always had an overactive imagination."

After graduating St. Paul, she went to Eastern Connecticut State University where she received a degree in theater and spent a month in an intensive program at the New York Film Academy. She launched her production company, Hells Bells, in 2008 at the ripe old age of 23.

While "SWAN Day" continues its parade of accolades, Sarah said she is working on a couple of other projects, chief among

them a film she wrote and directed called, "Rides." The film started production in 2009 and is expected to be finished soon after a few hiccups along the way. She also has plans to produce a web series once "Rides" is finished with post-production. There is also a sequel to "SWAN Day CT" in the works.

Eventually, as a film documentarian, Sarah said she would like to see one of her films reach wider distribution. She would love to have a piece cablecast on a HBO or IFC.

"The ultimate goal for all of my projects is that they can find an audience at film festivals, in theaters and on TV... I just like to tell a great story... and that's what I always want to be doing," said Sarah.

If you're interested in seeing "Swan Day CT," the film is been available to download or stream at [www.NewFilmmakersonline.com](http://www.NewFilmmakersonline.com) for \$10.

For more information about Hells Bells Productions, go to <http://www.hellsbellsproductions.com>

# New horror flick uses Connecticut as its backdrop

By MIKE CHAIKEN  
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If you were on the east side of the state, somewhere near UConn or Eastern Connecticut State University, you may have seen some hot young film stars hard at work as the horror film "House of Dust" took up residence for two weeks of filming.

The new film, which was produced by Alex (A.D.) Calvo and Todd Slater, and directed by Calvo, used the Connecticut scenery as the backdrop to tell its story.

Press materials for "House of Dust" explains the film follows a group of college students who are exploring an abandoned mental asylum. During their adventure, they "accidentally shatter canisters holding the remains of former mental patients; inhaling the dusty ash filling the air, they're soon possessed by the souls once held within them. One, is a convicted serial killer from 1950."

The cast of "House of Dust" features several hot, young actors just getting their names out there including Holland Roden (MTV's "Teen Wolf"), Steven Grayhm ("The First Ride of Wyatt Earp"), Stephen Spinella ("Angels in America") Inbar Levi (MTV's "Underemployed"), Nicole Travolta ("The Middle"), Joy Lauren ("Desperate Housewives"), Eddie Hassell ("The Kids are All Right"), John Lee Ames ("Days of Darkness") and Alesandra Assante ("Looking for an Echo").

"We did an extensive search" for the cast that eventually was slated for the film, said Slater. The producer of "House of Dust" said he looked at hundreds of audition reels and saw hundreds of actors read for the four lead characters in "House of Dust": Emma, Dylan, Kolt and Gabby.

In the end, Slater and Calvo selected Lavi to play Emma; Hassel to play Dylan; Grayhm to play Kolt; and Gabby to play Roden.

When choosing who would be coming to Connecticut to film the project, Slater said, "It was all about pulling together an ensemble cast that jelled."

And Slater said, "All of these kids, all of them in their own particular audi-



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Steven Grayhm, left, and Holland Roden in a still from the film, 'House of Dust,' which recently completed filming in Connecticut.

tion, really gelled from day one."

Slater said "House of Dust" especially lucked out in securing Holland Roden, who is part of the really hot "Teen Wolf" on MTV. But Slater explained he does what he can to keep on top of who is new and hot.

From top to bottom, Slater said of the cast, when the project starting filming in Connecticut late last month, the actors did "tremendous work. They're young and talented."

When Slater signed on board as producer of "House of Dust," he said he did so because he had a prior creative relationship with Calvo. Slater, along with his brothers Grant and Todd, are the principles of

Slater Brothers Entertainment. Slater was executive director for Calvo's first film, "Other Side of the Tracks" and Slater Brothers was on board for Calvo's sophomore effort, "Melancholy Fantastic."

When Calvo started talking about a third effort, Slater said he wanted to take on a more hand's on role with the film.

Slater said when he first heard the concept for "House of Dust," he was sold. "It's so commercial." And it was a project, he knew he could sell to distributors.

Initially, said Slater, Calvo came to him with six different scripts for consideration. But when Slater

saw "House of Dust" from writers Nevada Grey and Alyssa Alexandria, he said, "This is the one that hit me over the head."

Slater said he reads hundreds of scripts because that's his job. And he said it's usually tough to find a good script. But "House of Dust" was an incredible find. "It's something I've never read before. It's an original in the college thriller genre."

Slater said "House of Dust" fits right alongside such financially successful horror films as "Insidious," "Paranormal Activity" and "Prom Night."

"This was a real opportunity," said Slater of the initial "House of Dust" script.

Slater also wanted to be part of Calvo's late production as well because "Alex has grown as a director... Alex is really kind of hitting his stride."

As for why Connecticut was selected for the production site, Slater said he and Calvo had used Connecticut for the previous two films. Many of the crew members they used on those films lived in Connecticut— who they wanted to work with again—were from Connecticut.

Additionally, Slater said the state of Connecticut offers great tax incentives for filmmakers who want to work here.

"From a financial, budget point of view, there was a lot of upside to filming in Connecticut," said Slater.

Besides that, Slater said, the people of Connecticut were "unbelievably nice and helpful" in making the film a reality.

Filming of "House of Dust" wrapped in Connecticut earlier this month after 24 days. Slater said the film will now head into post-production. He said there are plans to seek out a world wide distribution for the film. There already have been some interest expressed in the film even before it's completed.