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Ed Seaman

spotlight on the main line

Two planned movie studios could bring the stars to stay. *By Scott Pruden*

No one can blame you if you start to feel a little glitzier over the next year. If all goes as planned, the western suburbs will be getting an extra dose of moviemaking stardust in the form of two full-scale, Hollywood-caliber film production studios.

To quote the *South Park* guys, blame Canada—although this time, our neighbors have committed no crime. Historically, production companies that wanted to save money looked to the Great White North for location and production work, taking advantage of the weak Canadian dollar and the similarity of cities like Montréal to urban U.S. locations (even if it meant

having to dirty up the streets to make them look more American).

The fact that Pennsylvania and other states are now offering significant tax incentives to the film industry means that not only will more of the business stay stateside, it will begin seeping into the areas that no one ever thought of as movie towns—the Delaware Valley being one. Main Liners can expect the area to benefit in spades from the Commonwealth's 25-percent tax credit on production expenses for movie and television companies that spend at least 60 percent of a project's budget within Pennsylvania's borders.

Not that Philly and its suburbs have ever been slouches in the celluloid department. Within the past three decades, some of film's most iconic dramas, comedies and thrillers—*Rocky*, *Trading Places*, *Philadelphia* and

MVD Entertainment

The bounty of musical performances available today on DVD is easy to take for granted—especially if you're too young to have come up before home video. But you'll pardon those of us over 35 who might remind the rest of you that there were once these things called records, which played music and came in large covers—usually with pictures. And aside from *American Bandstand*, *The Midnight Special* and the musical guest on *Saturday Night Live*, that was one of the few places music and images met.

Thankfully, a veteran record store employee by the name of Tom Seaman saw the potential in something known as the picture disc. "He latched onto the idea of: Why just hear the music when you can see it and hear it?" says his son, Ed.

That simple question led him to create Music Video Distributors, which bought the rights to musical performances captured on video, releasing them on VHS tapes to be sold in record stores alongside LPs and 45s. With the living room as his first office, Tom made a phone book's worth of connections in the music business and became the godfather of performance music videos.

As tape faded, his interest in picture discs led him to the fledgling DVD format in the mid-1990s. "We jumped into the market early and were able to gain the rights to some great content, which we're still doing today," says Ed, COO of what is now MVD Entertainment (mvd2b.com).

Among distributors of music performance video, the Oaks-based MVD ranks third, below better-known names Sony/BMG and Universal. To date, the video division, MVD Visual, has distributed more than 1,000 titles in just about every genre, focusing almost exclusively on music performance DVD. Primary among its offerings are things you likely won't find on TV—reggae, heavy metal, punk, alternative rock and hip-hop among them. "We're certainly not tied to any particular genre," Ed says. "Frankly, we'd like to do a lot more classic rock, but the reality is it's really expensive and it's mostly tied up with major labels."

Of course, the Sam Goody and Musicland stores his father worked for have largely departed the scene. And with their demise, MVD has been forced to redirect its focus to online outlets, big-box electronics stores and independent retailers.

"There are still a lot of great independent stores," says Ed. "And the ones that remain now are great because they survived."

—Scott Pruden

The Sixth Sense among them—were shot locally.

But what the region has provided the film-going world in the form of great characters and stories it has lacked in infrastructure. Though there are plenty of Philadelphians in the film biz, crews for large-scale productions are usually imported from New York City at tremendous expense and inconvenience. Soundstage space, meanwhile, is nonexistent, forcing either location shots or a mass exodus back to Los Angeles or New York to film interior scenes. An exception is local-boy auteur and avid Hitchcock acolyte M. Night Shyamalan, who has maintained his commitment to filming in the area by famously converting just about every soundstage-sized space in Philadelphia into a studio at one time or another. The need is there. It's just that no one has been inclined to satisfy it.



main line moviemaking

Noteworthy films shot locally.

The Lovely Bones Release: 2009 Director: Peter Jackson
Genre: Drama/horror/thriller Starring: Mark Wahlberg, Rachel Weisz, Susan Sarandon Locales: Malvern, Paoli, Valley Forge, Wayne, East Fallowfield

The Happening Release: 2008 Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Drama/mystery/thriller Starring: Mark Wahlberg, John Leguizamo Locales: Unionville, Phoenixville

Our Lady of Victory Release: 2008 Director: Tim Chambers
Genre: Sports drama Starring: Ellen Burstyn, David Boreanaz Locales: West Chester

Shadowboxer Release: 2005 Director: Lee Daniels
Genre: Crime drama/thriller Starring: Cuba Gooding Jr., Helen Mirren Locales: Media

The Village Release: 2004 Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Drama/mystery/thriller Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Sigourney Weaver Locales: Chadds Ford

The Woodsman Release: 2004 Director: Nicole Kassell
Genre: Drama Starring: Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick Locales: Plymouth Meeting

Jersey Girl Release: 2004 Director: Kevin Smith
Genre: Comedy/drama/romance Starring: Jennifer Lopez, Ben Affleck Locales: Havertown

Signs Release: 2002 Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Mystery/sci-fi/thriller Starring: Mel Gibson, Joaquin Phoenix Locales: Oxford

A Gentleman's Game Release: 2001 Director: J. Mills Goodloe
Genre: Sports drama Starring: Gary Sinise, Mason Gamble Locales: Media, Paoli, Springfield

Unbreakable Release: 2000 Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Drama/mystery/thriller Starring: Bruce Willis, Samuel L. Jackson Locales: Ithan

The Sixth Sense Release: 1999 Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Drama/mystery/thriller Starring: Bruce Willis, Haley Joel Osment Locales: Bryn Mawr

Wide Awake Release: 1998 Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Genre: Family comedy/drama Starring: Joseph Cross, Rosie O'Donnell Locales: Bryn Mawr

Addicted to Love Release: 1997 Director: Griffin Dunne
Genre: Comedy/romance Starring: Meg Ryan, Matthew Broderick Locales: Swarthmore

The Big One Release: 1997 Director: Michael Moore
Genre: Comedy/documentary Starring: Michael Moore Locales: Bryn Mawr

Philadelphia Release: 1993 Director: Jonathan Demme
Genre: Drama Starring: Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington Locales: Lower Merion

I Don't Buy Kisses Anymore Release: 1992
Director: Robert Marcarelli Genre: Comedy/romance Starring: Jason Alexander, Nia Peeples Locales: Ardmore

Clean and Sober Release: 1988 Director: Glenn Gordon Caron
Genre: Drama Starring: Michael Keaton, Kathy Baker, Morgan Freeman Locales: Ridley Park, Upper Darby

Eddie and the Cruisers Release: 1983 Director: Martin Davidson
Genre: Musical drama Starring: Ellen Barkin, Tom Berenger Locales: Haverford

Taps Release: 1981 Director: Harold Becker
Genre: Drama Starring: George C. Scott, Timothy Hutton, Sean Penn, Tom Cruise Locales: Valley Forge, Wayne

Marnie Release: 1964 Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Genre: Drama/mystery/romance/thriller Starring: Tippi Hedren, Sean Connery Locales: Unionville

David and Lisa Release: 1962 Director: Frank Perry
Genre: Drama Starring: Keir Dullea, Janet Margolin Locales: Wynnewood

The Blob Release: 1958 Director: Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr.
Genre: Horror/sci-fi Starring: Steve McQueen Locales: Chester Springs, Downingtown, Phoenixville, Royersford, Valley Forge

Bright Victory Release: 1951 Director: Mark Robson
Genre: Drama Starring: Arthur Kennedy Locales: Phoenixville

Compiled by Shannon Hallmyer.