

30 SECONDS OF FAME

Blade reporter has a (small) part in new film

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FINDLAY - I'm ready for my Oscar.

With the Academy Awards a little more than a week away, it's not too late. I just saw my performance in the independent movie *Randomocity*, and I give it four stars. Maybe more.

It wouldn't surprise me if you haven't heard of this movie. A tear-jerking drama, it was filmed in Findlay in August, 2006, by two local high school graduates on a budget of about \$60,000, super-ultra-low by Hollywood standards.

One day, though, you may find it on the shelf at your local video store. When that day comes, you will not see me in the credits. You will not hear me utter a word of dialogue. But you will see me walk out of a church, and you will see me staring straight ahead as I sit in that church, and you will feel the full power of my acting!

Or, you might not notice my 30 seconds of screen time at all.

I'm what they call an extra. I lurk behind the main characters or sometimes (if they let me) beside them.

I took part in the film as part of an article for this newspaper. It was fun being part of the anonymous crowd in a few scenes at First Lutheran Church in Findlay - even if it took six hours - but I never expected much to come of it. It wasn't finished after a few months and I began to think it never would be.

Then, a year and a half later, I got a phone call last week from Nancy Wilder, the movie's executive producer, mom of one of the screenwriters, and, with her husband Michael, its primary investor. She said the movie was done and there would be a free screening at the Carmike 12 cinemas in Findlay before it was submitted to various film festivals.

Randomocity is the brain child of E. Wilkerson Wilder and Tyler Lee Allen, high school buddies who co-wrote the screenplay and appear in the film, with Mr. Allen as one of the leads. The movie follows the lives of a young man named Ashley and his best friend, and what happens to them when Ashley's girlfriend is raped.

MULTIMEDIA

[See 'Randomocity' trailer \(YouTube\)](#)
[Read Ryan's 2006 story on filming](#)

There's a lot of clever writing and funny moments, but it's a serious-minded film. And with some violence, swearing, and partial nudity - not by me, I promise - the filmmakers practically guarantee an R rating.

Mr. Wilder, a senior at Transylvania University in Kentucky, edited the film during his spare time. Finishing it took longer than expected, he said, because of the decision to commission someone to create and perform an original music score and to take care of some technical issues.

When I walked into the theater on Monday, I had no idea what to expect. I knew little of the movie's plot and didn't know where my scenes would appear or how much of them would be left on the cutting room floor. All I knew was that in just a few hours this same theater with cup holders and stadium seating would be showing *Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins*, starring Martin Lawrence.

When the lights dimmed and more than 60 others settled into their comfy seats, my heart beat just a bit faster. I knew I was just an extra - an unpaid nobody - but it didn't feel that way.



Blade reporter Ryan Smith along with other extras wait during a pause in the taping of the movie "Randomocity" at the First Lutheran Church in Findlay, Ohio. (BLADE PHOTOS/TIM M. GRUBER)

So I waited for my debut. And waited. And waited.

In the meantime, I noticed a film that looked pretty good for a low-budget production. And I saw bits of Findlay all over the place, from the downtown streets to the former Woodland Restaurant to a "Go Bucks" sign.

Finally, about halfway through the film, it was time for church. Almost instantly, I found myself: third row of pews, just behind the main characters. On screen, I was staring straight ahead, clearly enthralled by the preacher's sermon. When the camera zoomed in on me (and the main characters, but whatever), I was still staring, my expression never changing.

Moments later, there I was again, opening the door so that people could leave church. I nodded to the main character, then went on my merry way, possibly - possibly - a tad too stiffly.

This took place in just a few seconds, and then it was over. That's when I realized that the other characters had been talking the whole time, and I had no idea what they'd said. I didn't know why they went to church or what they might do next.



Smith acting as an extra during filming.

All I can say to explain this is: That must have been some powerful acting I was doing, right?

As the rest of the story unfolded, I found myself shifting my gaze from the main characters to the other extras. I envied those in the restaurant and party scenes, where they could pretend to talk. One guy even got to play the guitar. To think what I could have done in those roles!

Near the end of the film, my character returned to the screen for my swan song, a funeral scene. While others around me cried - some with real tears! - I sat in my pew emoting sadness in a more restrained manner.

I grinned widely as I watched this scene in the theater. I felt guilty about it later, since this was a supremely sad moment in the movie, but I couldn't help it. The smirk disappeared, though, as I realized that my scene mourning in front of the casket had been cut. (Perhaps a move to save good material for the DVD extras?)

This was probably my only chance to watch *Randomocity* on the big screen. Its makers aren't seeking theatrical release because they made it without any big-name actors. Instead, they'll go to film festivals and try to sell it to distributors in the hope of getting a DVD deal to finance their next idea, a more light-hearted story set in New Orleans called *Easy*.

I can only hope that when they start to film that one, they'll write in an extra part for me. I'm ready. Just ask my boss.

I hadn't been back in the office for more than a few moments when I let out some exclamation over a computer problem. My editor, kind as always, responded: "You're such a drama queen."

My thoughts exactly.

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