



photo courtesy of Lions Gate Studios

**NORTH Vancouver's Andrew Van Slee directs actors on the set of one of his latest films, Adam and Evil.**

## **ANDREW VAN SLEE'S INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS ALLIANCE**

# **Filmmaker builds network**

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**DIRECTOR Andrew Van Slee returned to North Vancouver's state-of-the-art Lions Gate Studios in November to find the place practically deserted.**

"There was nobody here," says Van Slee, who explains that because of the rising Canadian dollar and the uncompetitive tax credit, business has been slow.

In order to bolster Canada's faltering film industry and reduce reliance on

American production, Van Slee decided to create the Independent Filmmakers Alliance of Canada (iFA). "I just wanted to get Canadians to put cameras in their hands and start shooting," says Van Slee, "Good, bad or ugly you've got to start somewhere."

Originally from the North Shore, Van Slee has spent over five years in Hollywood producing and directing movies. His film *Totally Blonde* helped launch Canadian crooner Michael Bublé to stardom. His latest project, a horror film titled *Adam and Evil* recently had a theatrical release in Italy and was distributed around the

world.

"It was just a little Canadian movie shot in 12 days for under \$300,000 bucks," says Van Slee. "You don't need a big budget to make a great movie," says the writer, producer and director, citing *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Open Water* and *The Blair Witch Project* as examples.

"As Canadian filmmakers get more experience we can make shows that are just as good as the American shows — if not better," says Van Slee. More than 70 people attended the first introductory seminar for the Filmmakers Alliance in April. The next free seminar is scheduled for Monday, May

16 at Lions Gate Studios.

The Independent Filmmakers Alliance is headquartered at Lions Gate Studios and is a membership-

*See Network page 24*

## **Network hosting workshop June 8**

*From page 21*

based organization. For \$95 a year, members can access edit suites, office space, equipment, budgeting software, mentorship and monthly seminars. "You don't have to have a film degree — anybody can participate," says Van Slee, "as long as you have an interest in the movie biz."

Van Slee describes his new network as "one giant back scratch," as the iFA will play a big role in the distribution of Canadian films and in teaching people not only how to make movies, but how to tell a good story. "There are (local) films that are shot and some of them go to the Vancouver Film Festival and win awards," says Van Slee, "but they don't go anywhere after that, they just sit there."

With productions in the works involving rock stars, supermodels cooking exotic dishes, and teen spies working for the CIA, Van Slee knows how to capture the attention of an audience.

Van Slee says Canadian filmmakers can combat the bureaucracy and red tape of the industry by taking matters into their own hands. "Hopefully five years from now we'll have our own independent community and won't care if Americans are coming here to shoot."

One initiative to get people involved is the iFA's short screenplay competition. The winner will have their film produced with cameras, crews, editing and post-production all covered by the iFA and its sponsors. "There are lots of cool ideas out there and the hope is that we'll get a great story that we can submit for the Academy Awards in the foreign category," says Van Slee.

"Nothing would make me happier than to make stuff happen here — to see eight or ten feature films made in Vancouver and distributed all around the world."

The iFA will be hosting its next free introductory workshop on Wednesday, June 8 at Lions Gate Studios. For more information on the screenplay competition or on becoming a member of the iFA, visit [www.ifilmalliance.com](http://www.ifilmalliance.com) or call Lions Gate Studios at 604-983-5354.