

Stars Fell on Beaufort: Part Two

Written by Mark Shaffer, Editor at Large

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Wherein the Author Gets a Window Into the Movie Business. Literally.

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This is it. I finally made it into the movie business. It's almost like I imagined it would be as a kid. I'm dressed to kill in a white dinner jacket and black bowtie, hair combed back like a mid 20th century matinee idol, cigarette in my right hand (unlit), my left hand caresses a tumbler of bourbon. I am positioned – no, *posed* –

– at a café table shrouded in linen and littered with vintage World War II identification papers in both French and German. At my back is an old fashioned upright piano. All of this and me are on display in the massive center window of Beaufort's NeverMore Books. And if you haven't figured it out, I am a very poor stand-in for Humphrey Bogart's iconic Rick Blaine character in *Casablanca*

, the cynical, world-weary American ex-pat owner of Rick's Café American and some of the best lines ever uttered on film.

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“Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.”

“I remember every detail. The Germans wore grey. You wore blue.”

And, “Here’s looking at you, kid.”

But this isn’t *Casablanca*, and I don’t have any lines. Nope. I am literally window dressing as part of a scene in *Stars Fell on Alabama*, the first feature to shoot in Beaufort in 20 years. So, it’s kind of a big deal, and, as the title suggests, it’s not actually set in the Lowcountry.



The film comes by way of L.A. based husband and wife filmmaking duo, VW Scheich and Uyen Le (right). They’re familiar faces in town as Beaufort International Film Festival regulars and spent two years in Beaufort trying to get another film off the ground. That didn’t happen, but the time was not wasted. “It had a huge impact,” says Uyen, “because the friends we made over that time really came through in helping to make Stars Fell.” Enter Ron and Rebecca Tucker. They created the Beaufort Film Society (BIFF parent organization) as a way to bring the movies back to Beaufort. After more than a decade of near misses and false starts, the pieces began to fall in place after Ron got a call from LA last spring.

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“VW & Uyen are three time winners at BIFF, so the association was already established,” says Ron. “VW said he was going to direct a movie soon and he wanted to bring it to Beaufort.” As for the Alabama setting, not to worry, says Ron. “We’d already done it once in *Forrest Gump*.”

Good point.

The Tuckers came aboard as producing partners via the BFS and began to lay the groundwork within the community to bring the film home.

Meanwhile, back in the window...

Five days into a 17 day shoot and we’ve experienced all four seasons plus something I’ll just refer to as a freakish intermittent monsoon. That’s what’s happening now as I sit in my window watching sheets of frigid rain blow sideways down Craven Street.

The bookstore is packed to the rafters with equipment, cast, crew and extras all waiting for a break in the weather to dash outside and shoot a key scene in front of my window. Cinematographer Wey Wang monitors a Doppler app on his phone. VW stares into the street like a man who has not slept for a long time. “Beaufort averages four rainy days in November,” he says, “I think this is all of them.”

Actually, I think to myself, if this keeps up *next* November’s going to be gorgeous.

“Welcome to the movie biz,” quips my friend David Anderson. “It’s a lot like the military: hurry up and wait.”

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