

SCV comes into focus

Actor, producer discuss advantages of filming locally

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Clint Howard was eating stew out of a styrofoam bowl during a filming break at a house accessible only by a washboard dirt road, off San Francisquito Canyon Road, in Santa Clarita earlier this week.

The veteran actor, and brother of actor and director Ron Howard, was in Santa Clarita filming an independent horror film called "Huff," a modern suspense retelling of the three little pigs fairy tale.

Clint Howard has worked in Santa Clarita several times before and said the valley's close proximity to Los Angeles and numerous film locations make it a great place for movie-making.

"Out here, you can still find wonderfully rural areas," Clint Howard said. "You still can wander around out here."

The shooting location was a small ranch-style house surrounded by nothing but hills, chaparral and a dry creek bed.

The crew was able to film the movie entirely at one location because of the set's diverse setting, said Terry James, one of the movie's co-producers.

"The house has four entrances so we can make it look like four different houses," James said.

"It's wide open and looks like the country," James said. "But we're also close to Home Depot, in case we need something."

Santa Clarita is a quick 30-minute drive from Howard's San Fernando Valley home. While Howard is willing to travel almost anywhere to make a movie, the easy commute helps him focus on his acting, he said.

"I'm going the opposite direction of traffic," Howard said. "An easy drive makes filming more pleasurable."

The film will remake the classic fairy tale into a story about three low-income teenage sisters trying to escape a drug-dealing stepfather.

In the movie, Howard plays a character who gets stuck in a situation involving both the sisters and the stepfather.

Howard's father also has a role in the film. The film's executive producer Cort Howell is a longtime friend of the Howard family.

Those relationships and the close-to-home set helped Howard branch out as an actor, he said.

"I'm able to do things that I might be more fearful to do on a big-budget film," Howard said. "I can experiment more when there's less pressure."

"I've known Cort (Howell) since he was in diapers," Howard said.

"Huff" is the first feature film for Howell's company, Windchaser Pictures. He hopes the film will be shown in theaters some time in 2012.

Howell is a Santa Clarita resident and said the movie industry is changing its perception of working in the SCV.

"Before, you had to explain to people where you were shooting," Howell said. "But now people know it for filming."

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Actors Charlie O'Connell as "Huff," left, and Clint Howard as "Karl," right, rehearse a scene for the camera crew during the filming of the feature film "Huff" in Santa Clarita on Wednesday.



Actor Clint Howard, playing the character "Karl," right, and executive producer Cort Howell discuss the action of a scene while on the set of the feature film "Huff" in Santa Clarita on Wednesday.