



Rich Cooley/Daily photo

Lisa Mikitarian, writer/producer, right, checks a video monitor as sound mixer Lentrell McEachern, of Los Angeles, center, and actor Tony Villa, left, prepare to shoot a scene in the movie "Spent" on the second floor of Phlopsey's in Woodstock.

Indie film shoots in Woodstock

By Rachel Mahoney

WOODSTOCK — Writer and director Lisa Mikitarian is leading a diverse array of cast and crew for her upcoming debut film, "Spent."

Mikitarian began working on "Spent" as a film noir that evolved into a farce noir — a comedy with a vintage feel about a miserly man diagnosed with a brain tumor and new-found freedom for his life and son. The project blossomed from a small venture idea into a feature-length endeavor that drew a network of individuals from near and far with all different levels of experience.

"This is my first full-length screenplay, and by far the most ambitious thing I've ever done," Mikitarian said.

Shooting began on July 4 at a private fireworks show in Fort Valley, and the team has filmed about half of the script at various spots from Harrisonburg to Winchester. Mikitarian said local businesses have been sup-



Actor Tony Villa sips on coffee while talking on the phone in this scene in the indie film "Spent."

portive in cooperating with the film crew for scene locations.

Although Mikitarian hadn't met much of her crew before starting the film, they've grown within the project and taken

their roles very seriously. She said that once California-based cinematographer David Doko signed on to be director of photography, the project expanded in scale and depth.

"It just raised the bar and the level for the entire film, and we have all been working to just help it fulfill its potential," she said. "Nobody's ever worked with one another before."

Assistant director Emily Price flew in from Oregon to start working on the film on July 13 only days after learning about the film and accepting the job offer. After she got to know the operation better and began working, the crew went from filming a page of script per day to around six pages per day.

"I'm actually doing something I really like to do and I think I'm pretty good at it," she said. "They tell me I'm magic, so I'm happy."

Being a micro-budget film at \$25,000 (whereas most low-budget films are at around \$200,000), many of those working on the film are volunteering their time and efforts. For Price, the interesting mix of a modern story presented in distinctive 1940s-inspired film noir style



Rich Cooley/Daily

Alexander Colon, a videographer from Lynchburg, frames this scene with his camera while filming the indie movie "Spent."

Film

Continued from A1

was what intrigued her.

The small scale of production means that many involved with the film have to play multiple roles at once, and because of the wide spectrum of experience levels the project has proved to be a learning experience for everyone involved.

Actor Tony Villa plays Gregory in the film, making his screen debut with-

in a long history with theater. He listed off a plethora of roles that Mikitarian takes on in addition to directing her story.

"She's so much more than a director and producer. She wears hats that you might never expect," he said.

Mikitarian and the team are aiming to complete filming by the end of August so that certain cast and crew can begin work on other projects. Although film editor Jeff Herberger is working on editing and finishing

footage while filming occurs, the premiere date will be sometime next year.

Although the project is a large and at times intimidating one, Mikitarian said she has plenty of help from her production team, her optimistic nature and her husband Sam.

"We all agreed that if there's not a little bit of fear in your belly when you start something, then you might not have picked a challenging enough project," she said.

Mikitarian has been working with Doko on a screenplay for a large-scale film project titled "Pilgrim's Progress," though they are still at the conceptual stage. Mikitarian said they are waiting until "Spent" is finished to move any further.

Learn more about the film at <http://www.spent-movie.com>.

Contact staff writer Rachel Mahoney at 540-465-5137 ext. 164, or rma-honey@nvdaily.com