



Photo: Rachelle Jones

INDIE LENS: RICHARD OLAK

BY DAVID MORRISON

The curmudgeonly Hollywood legend Stanley Kubrick certainly summoned some precious quotes in his time. One of the less controversial advised that “the best thing young filmmakers should do is get hold of a camera and some film and make a movie of any kind at all.”

While it’s a romantic notion to consider that these words may have galvanized 24-year-old Qualicum Beach independent filmmaker Richard Olak into a frenzy of productivity, it is not the case. Claiming no specific muse or cinematic influences beyond a bunch of movies he rather enjoys, Olak is very much his own man. Nonetheless, for all to see, he has to date indubitably embraced the mentality Kubrick was pitching with a stunning run of wildly diverse offerings. And it’s set to get wilder.

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Richard Olak directing actress Rachelle Jones for his forthcoming film ‘The Battle of Burgledorf.’ Photo: Sam Carniato

I've been captivated by Olak's work in the course of researching this article. The wistful simplicity of *TMIFIL*, just two minutes short, captures gentle flirtations bathed in the light of early spring. His riveting documentary *Block 486* is an unbiased presentation of attempts to find compromise in a human drama of conservationists versus loggers, nature versus economics in the interior of B.C.

Olak's opening narrative for *Block 486* states: "I believe film can immortalize, capturing the soul or essence of a subject for an uncertain eternity." I think he has achieved precisely this in his most recognized film to date, the award-strewn *It Still Haunts Me*. Over just eight emotionally punishing minutes, he examines the numbing disbelief that lies at the core of the grieving process. As heartrending as it is, it's also a quite beautiful piece of filmmaking that displays Olak's skills as writer, producer, director and editor in almost embarrassing abundance. Oh, did I mention he also composed and performed the soundtrack?

"I never had a goal or dream when I was younger to be an actor or a filmmaker, though looking back I was enamoured by the ability of a film to create a separate world in which anything could be possible," Olak explained when I enquired if he was realizing a long-held ambition to take up the camera. He actually initially pursued acting, later turning to the creation process in Vancouver's Langara College Digital Film Program.

Whilst he still occasionally slaps on the greasepaint and will continue to do so, filmmaking is where he sees at least his immediate creative future. "I prefer filmmaking because it starts out with an original idea, and through the process...writing, directing, editing...I make something physical," he revealed. "With acting, even though you make it your own, you still audition for someone else's film, speak someone else's dialogue and have no control over how it turns out."

Control is something Olak most definitely has over his next project – and from the teasers on its website and MySpace page, it seems we can expect something truly out of the ordinary. "*The Battle of Burgledorf* is the greatest epic adventure of our time, inspired by the factual events of a portal to another world being opened, and the evil that lay beyond it," he informs me quite casually, delivering the information with such confidence that I can only nod in agreement.

"It's a feature film I've been writing for the last three years and plan to start directing early next year. I'll be doing most of the filming on the Island and I'm hoping for it to be finished later in 2008," Olak continues, adeptly dangling the carrot of anticipation just beyond the reach of this particular movie buff.

With a photographer father, painter mother and musician brother, Rolla – a contributor to Richard's soundtracks – the Olaks are one highly creative family of achievers. But I wondered where this talented young man might want his craft to take him. Just how grand are his ambitions? Does he envisage seeing Oscars and BAFTAs displayed on the mantelpiece some day?

"I think my ambition at this time is simply to make a movie...and the one I'm making now is going to blow your mind!" he responds, in no doubt whatsoever as to the effect his epic new production will have upon the viewer. If the trailer is any indication, there is not one reason to disbelieve him. ~

On the Internet: ~ www.burgledorf.com and www.myspace.com/thebattleofburgledorf