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Back in the days when smoking was still hip and Demi Moore could get away with feathering her hair, the grassy quad at the U. of Maryland was no more an icon than a once non-descript zip code in Beverly Hills.

Until Columbia Pictures came along.

And the now famous scene of seven Georgetown U. grads making their way across the U. of Maryland grounds against the stark pillars of Greek row has made the set for *St. Elmo's Fire* a bit of a legend — at least among college campuses.

The movie industry, after all, has the ability to put a campus like the U. of Maryland on the map — not for any great academic achievements but for a picture-perfect postcard kind of scene that says: "Now this is a college."

Though *St. Elmo's Fire*, which traces the friendships of the seven through the period of adjustment that follows graduation, supposedly takes place at Georgetown, it is the Maryland campus that gets the billing.

"It's something you point out to your friends who don't go to Maryland," says Kate Carraway, a Maryland senior. Carraway is a member of Sigma Kappa sorority, where Rob Lowe was filmed in a bathroom for the movie.

"Everyone's like 'Really? That's awesome,'" she says. At the same time, though, sharing a house where Lowe once walked isn't that big of a deal to the sisters who live there. "We don't make a big deal about it; it's just a point of information."

A point, though, that Memphis State — where Paramount just finished filming *The Firm* — hopes to capture for itself.

The film, based on John Grisham's novel, stars Tom Cruise as Mitch McDeere, an honors graduate of Harvard law school who declines offers at the nation's top law firms to accept a position at a small but wealthy partnership in Memphis.

The Firm, set for release this summer, forgoes the ivy walls of Harvard for the campus of Memphis State. "First and foremost, you're looking for the look. You

On Location On Campus



Where does TriStar go to film the story of a Notre Dame football player? The U. of Notre Dame, of course.

**Hollywood goes back to school
to find the picture-perfect campus.
Here's where it ended up.**

By Jill Salomon, *Rice Thresher*, Rice U.

want to shoot what people *think* it's going to look like," says Mike Dellheim, location manager of *The Firm*.

In the case of *The Firm*, Memphis State was ideal not only for its ivy walls and tree-lined streets but also because the rest of the movie takes place in Memphis.

"[Location mangers] choose some shots based on convenience. Cruise comes to a Memphis firm — the first thing they think of is to call Memphis State," says Gregg Brilliant, publicist for Paramount.

And that's one call few administrators mind taking.

"[*The Firm*] was a wonderful thing for the university. For one thing it highlights

the university, and the faculty, staff and students were ecstatic to see the movie come together," says Jann Hartmann, video coordinator in the media relations department at Memphis State.

Memphis State — like most campus movie sets — got a sweet deal for its cooperation. Though university officials and industry people are hush-hush on the specifics of the deals, Dellheim says Memphis State got "a fair offer."

At Rice U. in Houston, where the BBC filmed a TV mini-series last summer, a movie deal amounted only to about \$3,000. But Greg Marshall, who coordinated the filming for the university, says it was

enough. "We're not interested in trying to make money, just trying to compensate everyone for their inconveniences. We didn't make a whole lot on it, but it was fascinating for the students."

Being in the movies, though, isn't always in the cards for a university. The U. of Notre Dame wanted more than just a fair offer before it would allow a film crew on its campus. Dick Conklin, vice president of university relations, says Notre Dame has wanted to keep its focus on academics, refusing movie offers to maintain its integrity in education.

But for a true story of a young man whose lifelong dream was to play football for Notre Dame, university officials found it hard to say no.

Rudy, set for release sometime next fall, stars Sean Astin as the Notre Dame football player who pursues his lifelong goal to wear the uniform, if only for one down. Producer Rob Fried says Rudy himself tried to get the university to cooperate for several years before TriStar stepped in to get his story told. When the university finally assented, the production crew moved in.

"We've turned down several scripts on this same story before we said OK to this one. The others were only football movies and the last thing we need is a football movie.

This movie uses football as a metaphor for a young man chasing his dream," Conklin says.

In this case, the production company chose Notre Dame because the location is so central to the plot.

Of course, at a school like the U. of Southern California, where *Gross Anatomy*, the *House Party* movies and part of *The Graduate* were filmed, all this movie business gets a bit old after a while.

USC students tend to ignore the production crews, says USC junior Eddy Sato, who was an extra once for a CBS TV movie. "After a while, you just walk by and don't really care. There are so many films done here — it's overkill."

But at college campuses — like Memphis State — not frequented so often by Hollywood production crews, the simple fact that its school will be named in the credits is enough.

"I guess if we did it every day, people would get tired of it," says Corey Hickerson, a junior at Memphis State. "But for that one day, you can't imagine what it was like."

Class of '96 tries to make mark in line-up of cheese

With networks scrambling to reach college students through a cheesy line-up of shows like *The Heights*, *Covington Cross* and *2000 Malibu Road*, a new offering is struggling to set itself apart from the mediocrity.

Class of '96, which debuted in January, chronicles the craziness and drama in the lives of seven college freshmen.

The series is filmed at the U. of Toronto (a campus with an East Coast look) that provides an idyllic college setting.

If this show sounds like another Fox program hoping to test the limits



of the youth-oriented audience, it is. The network is looking for another *90210/Melrose Place*-type show, and it thinks it has it in *Class of '96*.

There are plenty of cool dressers and plenty of stereotypes as well. Kari Wuhrer plays Robin Farr, a promiscuous strawberry blonde who is fond of, among other things, lingerie.

But there's more to the young vixen than a plentiful underwear drawer. "She's streetwise as well as book smart," Wuhrer says.

The show is the brainchild of former Columbia U. professor John Romano, who says *Class of '96* will raise some eyebrows by dealing with college issues like date rape, anti-semitism, scholarship and sports.

But, most of all, Romano says, the show will be about college life in general. "College is the place where the American Dream still lives."

■ J. Mark Dudick, *Montana Kaimin*, U. of Montana