

Lawson brothers team up on "Grimm"

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Lawson majored in telecommunications at the University of Oregon. His junior year he talked himself into an internship at Portland's KOIN television in commercial production. After graduation, he began looking for work in that field.

"I did a Shriner's All Star Game; that was my first paying gig. Holding a microwave wand on the far sideline."

He worked in sound production for Blazer Broadcasting, but things took off for him in the late 1980's when he got hired as best boy for one of the many made-for-TV-movies that filmed in Portland.

The key grip, Don Duffield, liked what he saw and after working with Bruce Lawson on another movie, he recommended the "rookie" to act as key grip on the third film.

"I thought, geez, I'm just a kid – I've only done local commercials and sports," Lawson remembers. But he did it.

Now, Lawson heads a grip team of twelve members, including his two brothers. You've seen the titles, but what do they actually do? Simply put, they're problem solvers.

"You have to be good at lots of different things to solve everybody's problems. If wardrobe needs someplace to hang the second change of clothes, they come to you for a c-stand.

"The electricians have their lights, but they don't have sandbags to make them safe, so we have to level them up and make them safe."

The most creative work comes after the lights are set.

"I like to say we sculpt the light. We diffuse the light and put the shadows back in.

"We make it look real and we make it look more beautiful." Or, on location, they might put up a giant swath of silk

overhead to soften the sunlight.

Grips are also in charge of camera movement. Brian is the dolly grip on the camera.

"There are three pieces to the 'camera creature,' Bruce Lawson said. "There's the head, which is the camera operator. There are the eyes, which is the assistant cameraman and he focuses."

Then there's Brian, who's the body and the feet. His job is to actually put that head of the camera creature in the right spot. Managing the needs of the grips is the best boy, who is Brent.

"He's like my business manager for the department," Lawson says. "He makes sure we have all the manpower we need when we need it, plus all the special gear, and he also takes care of the paperwork for each episode."

Twenty-five years ago the brothers formed BLT – Brothers Lawson Team. In 2010, they joined with another Wilson High graduate, Mark "Sparky" Haleston to form Elite Camera Cars, after Haleston learned of the opportunity to buy a special trailer and crane.

They use them to film in cars that actors pretend to be driving, but are actually on the trailer. The purchase was an expensive gamble.

"We brought those up, not really knowing where it would work," says Lawson. "But we felt like it was going to be a good investment for the price. And we were right. We use the crane – the 'elite' – probably two or three days every episode."

There is a lot more local work, partly because of the state tax incentive to production companies for shooting here.

"The incentive says they have to spend a certain amount in Oregon," Brent Lawson said. "They don't require you to hire the crew, but the more vendors they hire in the state, the better."

However, the other part of that equation is having the professional



Brothers Brian, Bruce and Brent Lawson stand by one of their trucks filled with everything necessary for grip work on the NBC television series, "Grimm." (Post photo by KC Cowan)

vendors necessary. "Grimm" sound mixer Tyler Stephens said producers want to hire capable crews locally, because bringing crew up from Los Angeles is too expensive.

"So, having the Lawson team here and their equipment is essential to bringing a production into a fringe market like Portland," Stephens said.

It's provided years of solid employment for the Lawson brothers. Not in Bruce Lawson's job description are all the other things he does on set.

One crewmember dubbed him the "mayor of Grimm," because he is always promoting charitable activities, like a toy drive, or volunteering at the Oregon Food Bank.

Film and television crews work notoriously long hours; 12-hour days are common. But working on "Grimm" is a happy place to spend those hours. In a sense, the crew becomes "family."

"I'm just lucky I get to work my real family, too," Bruce Lawson said.

Maybe there's something in the water. In addition to the Lawsons, there are seven

other Wilson High alums who work on "Grimm." "Grimm" airs Friday nights at 9 p.m. on KGW-TV, Channel 8.

Baby Boot Camp fitness program

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by Nike and other local stores.

Hasman has weaved a variety of other supportive programs together with local businesses. A baby signage class is scheduled and a reading program for parent and toddler was organized at the library right around the corner.

Baby Boot Camp, founded in 2001, follows the guidelines set by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the American Council on Exercise.

"I couldn't be more excited to bring moms together in Southwest Portland for not only a fantastic fitness class but fun and friendship for them and their little ones," Hasman says.

For more information, contact www.babybootcamp.com. The first class is free.

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