

Episode No. 2 of web series 'Culpa' premieres

Director boosts production values of quirky black comedy

By Erick Bengel
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A private investigator named Ronny Glasswell is hired to track down the stolen skeleton of a man named Edgar, whose widow, Mona, is losing her mind.

En route to a cliffhanger, Ronny is forced to contend with Mona's dysfunctional family and a retired cop seeking revenge for the incarceration of his granddaughter-molesting twin brother.

Meanwhile, elder abuse, drug addiction and other sordid subplots play out against a backdrop of vivid Oregon locales.

This is the quick and dirty synopsis of "Edgar," the second webisode

of Arch Cape Studio's low-budget independent web series named "Culpa." "Edgar" premiered at Manzanita's Hoffman Center Jan. 9 and is available for download at culpa-online.com.

A 'humbling experience'

"Edgar" — another foray into the creepy, quirky character studies that defined episode No. 1 — takes place about six months after the events in the pilot, which premiered last July.

Drew Reid, the Manzanita-based writer/director, shot the 29-minute black comedy over four months (plus one month of editing) in Arch Cape, Mohler, Wheeler, Nehalem, Manzanita, Portland and Oregon Route 53 — all for approximately \$750, he said.

"It's difficult to make a film with a huge budget and talented actors, but just try to do it on a shoestring budget with volunteer people," said Judson Moore, a cast mem-



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

From left: Winston Laszlo, a cast member and co-producer; Drew Reid, the writer, director and producer; Judson Moore, a cast member and production assistant; and David Dillon, the Hoffman Center's film program coordinator, make sure their projection equipment is working moments before the premiere of "Culpa: Episode 2."

ber and production assistant from Manzanita. "I've just been really impressed with Drew's ability to direct this whole thing and really produce something that's very watchable and really interesting."

Moore is part of a local cast that also includes Cannon Beach resident Pia Shepherd as Mona. For three of the main roles, Reid snagged

actors from the Portland Actors Conservatory.

"It's a real humbling experience just to be involved with people who are really trying to do their best work," Reid said of his cast and crew. "It's so exciting to watch the words that I write, which are just cold black dots on a piece of white paper ... They breathe life into them. They really give them form and

structure. That's really cool to watch, man."

"I'm curious to see what's going to happen in episode three," said Shepherd, who was in Los Angeles when the second episode premiered.

'Cracking the whip'

With each new episode, Reid aspires to raise "Culpa's" production values — acting, editing, writing, com-

position, etc.

Winston Laszlo, a cast member and co-producer from Wheeler, said that "Edgar" represents "some steps forward" from episode No. 1. Reid himself remarked, "I can't stand to watch episode one, to be honest with you."

The series "feels like it has the potential of growing into something," Laszlo said. "I don't think it's there yet, but I think that, if we keep at it, and Drew keeps cracking the whip, we may kind of figure out how to do this."

"Culpa" appears to be building an audience of North Coast residents eager to see the direction the show will take, Moore said.

The first season will consist of five episodes, and Reid intends to produce the remaining three before the year is out, he said.

By season three, Reid wants the show to be available on Netflix, Hulu or Amazon.

"That's my goal. That's where I'm headed," he said.

Tenacious McQuhae is not afraid to jump into a fray

McQuhae from Page 1A

but the Cannon Beach citizenry seemed mostly to side with McQuhae, he said.

The same can't be said of the proposed Chapman Point dune grading project that McQuhae helped bring before the planning commission last spring.

The sand dunes in Chapman Point, where McQuhae owns a home with his wife, Diana, have grown by tens of feet, blocking the beachfront views of houses built in the late 1990s and early 2000s. McQuhae and the Chapman Point Homeowners Association had hoped the city would lift the subdivision's restriction on dune grading, allowing them to shave down the dunes west of their prop-

erty just as homeowners at Breakers Point and Ocean Avenue are allowed to do.

But the opposition came out in force, arguing that it would degrade one of Cannon Beach's most striking landscape features and diminish a beloved public resource.

These arguments do not resonate with McQuhae.

"Society places a premium on things of beauty, like views. Views go with property," he said. "Land that has a view commands a premium. It does; it's more expensive. It's more expensive because it has a view."

People who own their property, he said, "have a right to protect the value of their property. I can't imagine why (some residents) think that we would want

to despoil our front yard, but they seem to think that that's what we're up to."

Dune grading at Chapman Point eventually will have to happen, he said, because letting the dunes continue to build up unchecked is "just not cricket. It's not fair to have people lose a great portion of the value of their property due to public opinion."

Into the past

Born in Saskatoon, Canada, McQuhae — who also owns a home in rural Washington County — earned a bachelor's degree in applied science at the University of British Columbia and a Ph.D. at London's Imperial College of Science and Technology. For 30 years, he worked in the semicon-

ductor industry. At Northern Telecom Limited in Ottawa, Canada, and at Intel in Hillsboro, he helped develop the processes for manufacturing silicon chips for modern electronic devices.

After retiring in 1999, he began looking into the origins of his unusual Scottish name — "You don't find too many of us in this world," he said — and embarked on a family history research project. "I got into that in quite a big way."

Ten years later, McQuhae had more or less finished the project.

He spent many hours sifting through sheets of microfiche and reels of microfilm, piecing together his lineage as far back as he could. Through the Church of Latter-day Saints

— which has an enormous database of birth records, burial records, marriage records and census records — he traced his ancestry, on his mother's side, back to Germany in the early 1800s and to England in the mid-1700s. On his father's side, he traced it back to Scotland in the mid-1700s.

Beyond a certain point, his family history goes silent because there are no more records to find. Nevertheless, McQuhae's research gave him tremendous insight into the past.

"You're learning about the times, the era they lived in, the type of conditions there were, what people did for a living, what things cost," he said. "You're just absorbing all kinds of information that's

there, not because you're looking for it but because it's peripheral to what you're looking for, and it just presents itself."

A family's having up to 13 children was "quite common," he said. "Losing three of those children to childhood illnesses was quite common. They didn't have cures for diphtheria, measles. Many children died of tuberculosis."

He never met his father's mother and barely remembers his father's father, "but through studying family history, I feel I know them, and I feel I know their parents."

Asked whether he enjoys the spare time retirement affords him, McQuhae smiled and said, "I seem to fill it."



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