



Grad student calls home Butte actors for film

Butte's spirited side

By John Grant Emeigh of The Montana Standard | Posted: Friday, January 6, 2012 12:00 am

The actors bounced a few lines off each other as they prepared to shoot their next scene at the bar of the Silver Dollar Saloon in Uptown Butte.

"Yeah, that will work," Kelley Mattingly says as he sets up the camera.

This is how the 28-year-old filmmaker wants his first feature film to be: loose and realistic.

"I don't really have a script. It's more of an outline," Mattingly told The Montana Standard between takes Thursday afternoon. "I want it to be more spontaneous and improvised acting."

The University of Montana graduate student is spending the next two weeks filming the full-length independent movie at locations around Butte. The Butte native's project, titled "Hotel Finlen," makes his hometown as much of a character in the film as the other actors.

Many of the scenes for the fictional story are being filmed at Butte's historic Finlen Hotel, Silver Dollar Saloon and Gamer's Cafe. Mattingly wants to show the gritty side of Butte, with its neon lights and wandering souls.

The film also stars two former Butte residents who came in from Los Angeles where they work as professional actors. Brick Patrick plays the lead role of Sean — a self-destructive young man who works as a custodian at the Finlen.

Patrick (which is his screen name; his real last name is Prigge) said he's happy to return to Butte to work with Mattingly. It took one phone call and a discussion about the story to convince Patrick to sign on.

"Kelley is a wonderful collaborator. As soon as I got off the phone with him I said, 'this is the guy I want to work with,'" Patrick said.

The female role, played by Karen Jean Olds, is a mercurial young woman ambushed by her grandmother's recent death. She is forced into a world of loneliness and memory, and looks to Sean for comfort.

Olds, who graduated from Butte High with Patrick in 1999, also returned to her hometown to work on the film.

"Butte is so rich in history and it's great to come back and do something that supports the town," Olds said.

Olds and Patrick both attended the University of Montana and received their master's degree from University of California at Irvine.

Longtime Butte resident Kevin Lowney plays a barfly who likes to sing Irish folk songs. Lowney said the young actors and crew are a pleasure.

"I think the reason they're so nice is they're all from Montana," Lowney said.

Mattingly said the first three days of filming have gone well and they are ahead of schedule. He is producing the film on a budget of about \$10,000.

"In filmmaking terms that's not costly, but to my pocket it's costly," he said.

Mattingly used the website Kickstarter to raise just over \$5,000 for his film. His crew is also made up of many Butte residents who have volunteered their time to help with the project.

He hopes his film will be ready by June and plans to enter it into independent film contests. Mattingly says he also would like to have a screening at the Mother Lode Theatre.