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Murrieta man to debut 'April Moon' at film fest

By: CHARLES HAND - For The Californian

David Asmussen had to film "April Moon," simple as that.

"It is a hard thing to put your finger on," said the Murrieta resident whose first movie, "April Moon," will premiere this weekend at the Temecula Valley International Film & Music Festival. "If it is not in you, you're going to give up along the way."

Asmussen said he has been working on "April Moon" ---- filmed in Temecula and Murrieta using residents in some scenes ---- for eight years. He could have made the movie sooner, but he lacked the most important ingredient in any filmmaking endeavor, money.

He and his wife were willing to invest their money, but they did not have enough to cover even the shoestring budget of \$100,000 Asmussen had worked out. Nor had Asmussen been able to raise it before moving to Murrieta from Los Angeles.

Once in Murrieta, though, he took every opportunity to talk with potential backers and found a number of interested listeners, enough to come up with half the \$75,000 he needed to shoot the movie. The rest he got from a line of credit drawn on his home equity.

It all came together at the end of last year and Asmussen wasted no time in getting the cameras rolling. Filming was done in 15 days, though Asmussen finished editing only two weeks ago.

"I wanted it to be right," Asmussen said of the nine months and \$25,000 he spent on post-production.

If Asmussen seems driven, its because he is.

"I don't want anybody to tell me I can't do something," he said. "I want to know I gave it everything."

As for getting others to see his vision, he said, "Eventually somebody buys into your dream."

He managed to work some relatively well-known actors into the budget, including Kevin Dobson, who has had decades in television, as well as a number of movie roles. Dobson's television credits include "Kojak" and "Knots Landing," the latter in which he spent 11 years as the attorney M. Patrick McKenzie and won four Soap Opera Digest Awards.

Performing as the blind girl April is Stephanie Reibel, who has appeared in several movies and TV series. Starring opposite her is William McNamara as David Anthony, who has a number of movies under his belt.

The story is about the love between April, whose blindness has left her without a shred of trust in people and intimate relationships, and David, who is in love with her and dedicated to breaking through her walls. Of course

he eventually does, though he takes great risks along the way.

It is no accident that the male lead is named David.

"I thought I would play the part," Asmussen said.

Though Asmussen has a lifetime of thespian history behind him, none of it has been behind the camera, nor did he come to California from his native Texas to direct. He came to act.

He has been on stage in one way or another since he was eight years old and hoped to parlay that background into a film career when he moved to Los Angeles in 1990.

Though he got a few small parts, his plans did not work out and he decided to give it up and move to Murrieta, which is where things finally started happening for "April Moon," the script Asmussen had begun working on for so long.

"I thought for sure, 'There goes my film career,'" Asmussen said of his decision to move to the Southwest County, but it was here that he found the people interested in helping him take his vision to completion.

After the film festival, Asmussen wants to show "April Moon" at the Sundance Film Festival in Colorado, and hopes to get a distribution deal, the only real hope he has for recovering his investment and those of his backers.

"My investors would love to get their money back," Asmussen said, though all understood going in that film production is a risky business and that all of them could end up with little to show for their faith beyond a copy of the movie they had helped bring to life.