

Kids get movie debuts, a look behind scenes

Four local actors earn significant roles in TV movie

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

MILTONWOOD, HOLLYWOOD: on the 16 Mile Creek. Four local actors have significant roles in *Dead Silence*, a made-for-TV movie running this month on HBO (Home Box Office) and TMN (The Movie Network).

Lisa Dressler, 14, and her siblings, Dressler twins Justin and Kristin, age 9, as well as Vance Youngs, 12, will not likely be wandering Milton in dark sunglasses, but all have caught the movie bug and would love to appear in another film.

Dead Silence is the story of several deaf children and their teacher, who are taken hostage during a school trip after their bus is hijacked by three escaped convicts. Filled with suspense and drama, it is a fairly intense movie.

James Garner, of *Rockford Files* fame, plays a hard-nosed FBI negotiator who works for their release. Oscar winner Marlee Matlin plays the teacher.

The four local children were recruited at E.C. Drury School for the Deaf after producers posted audition sheets. Two other students from James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville are also in the film.

The film was shot primarily in Toronto last summer, where an old boiler building at Humber College was transformed into a slaughterhouse in which the convicts hole up. River scenes were filmed near Ottawa and rural scenes near Canada's Wonderland in Maple.

The movie is based on the book 'A Maiden's

Grave' by Jeffery Deaver, which is set in rural Kansas.

"Everyone auditioned for the parts and there were second and third auditions," said Lisa Dressler, through an interpreter. "I applied for one character and ended up with a different part."

Also appearing in the movie are Kim Coates, Charles Martin Smith and Canadian actress Lolita Davidovich. The movie was directed by Daniel Petrie Jr. who also directed the feature film *Toy Soldier*, another hostage drama. There were lots of jokes on the set that Mr. Petrie was strictly a hostage director.

"Most of what we did was acting rather than lines, except for the occasional 'I want my mother' which we made up as we went along," Lisa said.

The young actors were fascinated by the process of filmmaking but found it difficult to convince themselves that it was really them in the film. They had seen segments of the movie but were awaiting a complete viewing when it airs.

Surprised

"I couldn't believe that was me," said an animated Kristin. Her words were echoed by Vance Youngs, who admitted movie magic is now spoiled for him because he has seen how scenes are created.

"We talked with everybody on the set," said Lisa. "I thought it would be a little more strict, but it's really relaxed. We had an interpreter with us and we would find out how people did things. People were interested in talking to us as well and we would teach them how to sign their names and other important words."

Vance said he was surprised by the way everything in movies is layered into the final cut, with music, sound and all the effects dubbed in later.

The movie crew took pains to reassure the



Photo by GRANT PAINÉ

Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf students Vance Youngs (second from left) and (l-r) Justin, Kristin and Lisa Dressler appear in *Dead Silence*, an HBO drama starring James Garner, Marlee Matlin and Lolita Davidovich. The production can be seen on The Movie Network (TMN) over the next several weeks.

youngsters that the guns were not real and demonstrated how they simulate gunshots and blood. Kristin in particular wanted to see the movie version of bullets.

"One woman showed us how to get shot," said Lisa. "She had a small charge of gunpowder and some blood taped to her body."

The kids clearly remember the details and perfectionism exhibited by set designers and artists. The fictional school, for which school sweat shirts were made, was Laurent Clerc

School for the Deaf. Laurent Clerc is an historic figure in the deaf community, Lisa said.

The children mentioned how actors would be hanging around the set and seem quite normal, before they changed into their costumes and very believably took on the persona of policemen, or other roles.

Vance talked about having to do scenes over and over again. And all said the movie stars catch phrase 'Hurry up and wait' was

• see MOVIE on page 13

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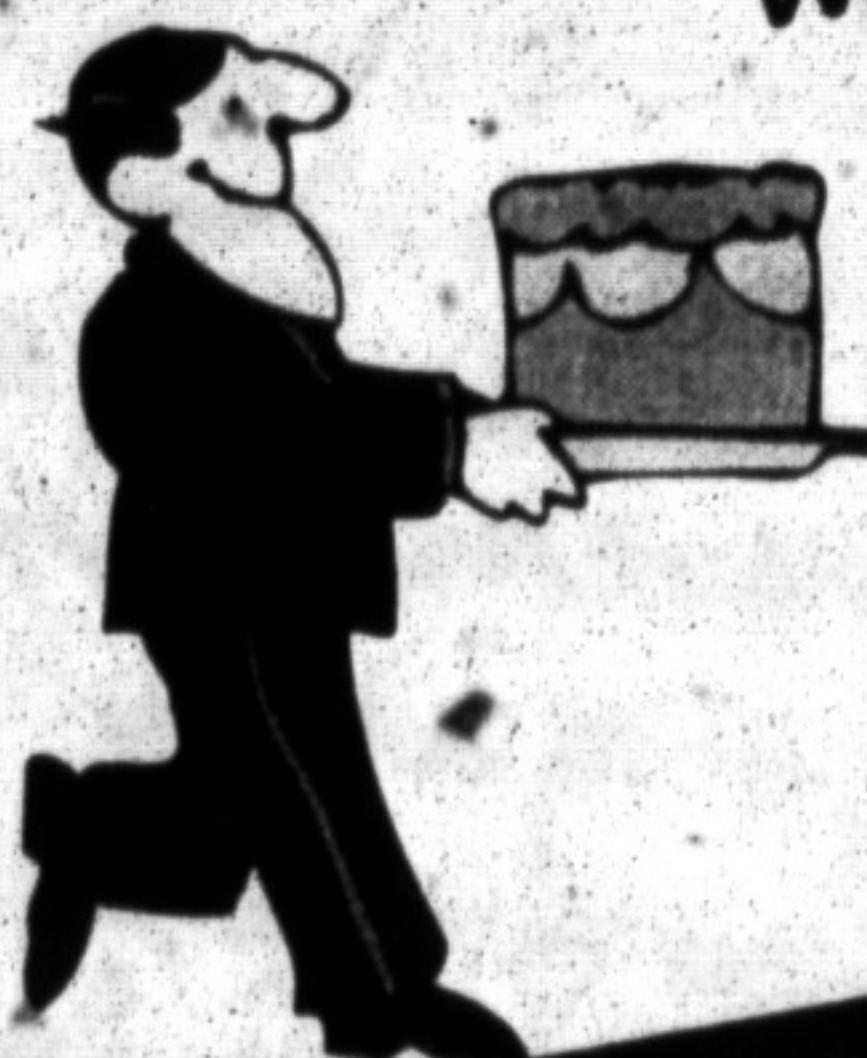
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