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### **Connecticut Plays Major Role In 'Diamond Ruff'**

**HARTFORD (Oct. 27, 2011)** The filming of *Diamond Ruff* was a team effort that tapped into the many resources that Connecticut has to offer filmmakers – talented cast and crew, urban and rural locations, and state and community support.

The action-packed movie features Fredro Starr in the title role as a successful con artist who falls victim to his greed and overconfidence. The movie was shot in September mostly in Hartford, but also featured locations in Willimantic, Manchester, Tolland, East Hartford, New Britain, and the state's closed Webster Correctional Institution in Cheshire.

“It was a great experience. As executive producer, I found that finding crew, cast and locations were very easy,” said Joe Young Jr., who wrote the *Diamond Ruff* book and movie script. “In the Greater Hartford area there are many people interested in film, but don't have a lot of opportunities.”

Young added that the business community has been very supportive and that several local businesses are sponsors. Young has also secured support from investors who are from Connecticut.

Young said that 95 percent of the crew was from the state, and “the state's Film Industry Training Program (FITP) played a major part in the *Diamond Ruff* movie production. Most of the FITP crew were well trained.”

About 12 members of the crew, including assistant directors and script supervisor, were graduates of the intensive training program supervised by working professionals, said Magda Grover, an FITP graduate who worked as second and first assistant director. *Diamond Ruff* was one of several productions in the state to use FITP grads.

“It's a valuable resource and I hope that the state continues this wonderful program,” Grover said.

Alec Asten, the film's director, agrees.

“Most states have tax incentives to lure larger productions to their territory, but none have created an infrastructure from within,” Asten said. “Connecticut is leading the pack because it has a vision. Filmmaking is not a New York- or LA-based business anymore. Companies like Young! Feature Films have the opportunity to flourish because we have skilled labor within our state.”

**(more)**

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Asten, who runs SouthEastern Connecticut Filmmakers (SECTFilm) which helps support local filmmakers, said he has noticed an explosion of activity in the past few years. “We have had tremendous growth in the entertainment industry because many individuals not only love where they live, but are also dedicated to make a livelihood in Connecticut. As a matter of fact, I have several friends from the West Coast who have moved back to Connecticut because they realize that there are more opportunities here.”

In addition to the crew, most of the supporting cast and extras were from the state, Young said. “As far as the cast, at our first audition we had over 500 people show up without any major advertising.”

“One of the state's richest resources is the diverse locations scattered across the region,” Asten said. “But the amazing thing is it's not just a great location, it's a location where local and town officials will go out of their way to support production. They do it because they are proud of their state and want to see the local production industry thrive.”

“Locations were easy to secure. Many venues were excited to have a film shot at their location,” said Young, citing their willingness to work with Young! Feature Films. Some of the locations included the Connecticut Convention Center and the Bank of America building in Hartford, and the old courtroom in Windham Town Hall in Willimantic. He said the municipalities were easy to work with, citing in particular Hartford which facilitated the shooting of several street scenes, including police car chase sequences.

“The City of Hartford truly opened its doors to us,” Grover said.

“The City of Hartford and Mark Dixon from the state's Office of Film, Television & Digital Media were fantastic.” she said. “They helped us secure great locations as well as put us in touch with people who could help us with props, filming locations as well as casting.”

“When we set out to create *Diamond Ruff*,” Asten said, “our goal was not only to produce a world-class motion picture, but to showcase the talent that Connecticut has to offer. I believe we are not only going to exceed everyone’s expectations, but Young! Feature Films will become a forerunner in Independent film and prove that Connecticut has a wealth of talent behind the lens as well as in front.”

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