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Kanab re-welcomes the Western

Mark Havnes and Rosemary Winters The Salt Lake Tribune

KANAB - Lights, camera, action. These words are again reverberating from the redrock walls in Kane County, a premier shooting location for Western movies for more than 40 years until the stars and cameras stopped coming in the 1970s.

In an attempt to capitalize on that cinematic history, the county's Office of Tourism and Film Commission, in conjunction with Kanab City and the state, are reviving movie making, relying on emerging filmmaking talent from college campuses instead of Hollywood.

A film crew has taken over the historic Heritage House in Kanab and other locations to make a movie by a graduate student with the University of Central Florida in Orlando.

With the film, "**Monster in the Attic**," the town hopes to set a precedent for luring budding filmmakers to the town every year.

Ted Hallisey, head of the county's Office of Tourism and Film Commission, said the idea was the result of a documentary project last year by the Florida college called "Cowboys With a Camera" that documented the areas in southern Utah where famed director John Ford shot his Westerns.

"We were sitting around a campfire one night talking about having a college film festival in the area," said Hallisey. "And that idea was the basis of the film projects."

Hallisey said Kanab, Kane County and the state ponied up \$20,000 for "**Monster in the Attic**." He said subsequent projects will get a similar amount of money.

The idea has already brought an economic infusion to the county.

"The cast and crew stay in area motels, and buy construction material and other things locally," said Hallisey, adding the group will spend about \$30,000 just for motel rooms.

He said a request for next year's project will be sent to film departments at universities across the country in December and a selection will be made in February. Selected films must be a PG or below and have Western theme or reflect the historical West.

That fit film director Danny Daneau's script just fine. The director of "**Monster in the Attic**" said Kanab and surrounding areas are magnificent for his movie, which stars Melissa Davenport and Jake Johnson, both 10 years old and experienced actors.

Daneau, who also made "Cowboys with a Camera," praises the areas landscape and film tradition.

"I fell in love with Kanab when I saw it," said Daneau at a coffee shop in the Perry Lodge last week, surrounded by a photo gallery of actors who appeared in old films shot in the region. "The people are great and the fact we get hard money allows us to come to a place like this and film."

Daneau said the premise of the film - his master's thesis - is children dealing with fear of the unknown. He draws a parallel between the monster in the title with the Boo Radley character in the book and film, "To Kill a Mocking Bird."

Producer Erica Harrell said townspeople have been generous with help. One couple let them borrow a motor home and a doctor found them tinted contact lenses on a Sunday.

By Hollywood standards, the move is "ultra-low budget, she said: A mere \$175,000."

Production is expected to wrap up this week and then it's off to film festivals to circulate the movie and find a distributor.

Next Saturday, the cast and crew will be in the parade of the Western Legends Round-Up, which begins Thursday.

On Sunday, Daneau and the crew of about 45 were at the old Paria townsite about 30 miles east of Kanab shooting a scene in which the young actors retrieve buckets of water from the Paria River.

During a break, Jake Johnson said he was heading back to school Monday in California. He said he's liked the outside shooting the best.

His costar, Melissa Davenport, said she was just having fun making the picture and had become best friends with all the crew. Her favorite scene was one in which she reads to a milk cow.

"I was a little scared at first," she said. "The cow had horns and I didn't know cows had horns."

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Caption:
[Photo: Director Danny Daneau rehearse a scene Sunday on the banks of the Paria River east of Kanab with actors Melissa Davenport and Jake Johnson.](#)

[Photo: Film crew gathers around camera under a reflective shroud Sunday on banks of the Paria River where they were filming a scene for the movie "**Monster in the Attic**."](#)

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