

ENTERTAINMENT

MELISSA MERLI: ART BEAT

Area actors shine in Danville man's film



Felled by a short-lived virus earlier this week, I assumed the horizontal on my couch Tuesday evening and took in entertainment with local connections:

— “Revolting,” a comedy directed,

produced and co-written by Mike Boedicker of Danville and shot in Danville and Champaign.

— The new cop ABC-TV series “Detroit 1-8-7,” starring Jon Michael Hill, a Tony Award nominee and University of Illinois grad.

— A recent issue of *The New Yorker* containing a short story by Richard Powers, a Swanlund chair professor and writer-in-residence at the UI and, of course, a winner of the National Book Award in addition to many other literary prizes.

First, “Revolting,” which recently won best comedy feature at the Illinois International Film Festival in Chicago. There were two other comedies in the running.

I viewed the movie, shot in high-def video, as a spoof of community theater and British comedies. Boedicker said that take is not wrong, but his premise was a literal take-off on the cliché, “The play wrote itself,” which indicates a script has flown off the page, with the characters taking on lives of their own.

In “Revolting,” the characters literally do that.

They appear to Jeff, the playwright, and revolt against him for the sequel he’s reluctantly writing to his only successful play, “Madcap Murderesses.”

Representing various aspects of the playwright’s personality, the three fictitious characters are portrayed by the community theater actors who appear in Jeff’s plays at the Castle Theater.

I was surprised by and impressed with the level of talent in this movie.

Bill Kephart of Champaign portrays Jeff the playwright. Kephart resembles actor Philip Seymour Hoffman but doesn’t appear to take himself too seriously, though he takes acting seriously.

Julia Megan Sullivan of Danville,



From left, Julia Megan Sullivan, Eric Sizemore, Bill Kephart and Leslie Boedicker are the lead characters in “Revolting,” co-written, produced and directed by Mike Boedicker of Danville.

a graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, is Penelope/Tanya, the divorced playwright’s love interest, as well as one of the characters wreaking havoc in his mind.

The other fictitious and “real” characters are played by Eric Sizemore of Champaign and Leslie Boedicker, the director-writer’s wife who with him co-produced the movie.

Sharon Tipsword delivers a convincing portrayal of the theater director who encourages Jeff, albeit in a direction he doesn’t want to take. Tipsword worked in various cities as a professional actress, playwright and acting coach before moving to Georgetown in southern Vermillion County.

Locations in “Revolting” included the Boedicker home, serving as the

playwright’s, on Roselawn Street in Danville; Danville’s Red Mask Theater, aptly renamed the Castle Theater through digital technology; Kickapoo State Park; and the High-dive and Isotech Laboratories in Champaign.

One thing I appreciate about “Revolting” is that the lead actors — Kephart and Sullivan — don’t look like the typical Hollywood actors. They’re plus-sized.

“I didn’t indicate body size when I cast it,” Boedicker said. “For Julia’s part, we had a number of actresses of different body sizes read. When I saw Julia and Bill together, I thought they had great chemistry.”

Boedicker also thought Sullivan brought energy to her role, especially that of the Doppelgänger, who represents the part of the play-

wright’s character that wants to cut loose.

While watching “Revolting,” I silently chuckled at some of the lines. After finishing a first draft, Boedicker had librarian Brian Wilson of Chicago help him hone further drafts.

“Revolting” is good technically, too. I wasn’t surprised to hear that Boedicker majored in communications, with a focus on TV production.

He minored at SUNY-Oswego in philosophy, and that comes through in the screenplay, too. (Some viewers get his Hegel joke, he said.)

While finishing his master’s degree in library science at the University of Buffalo, Boedicker moved to Danville 10 years ago to take a job at the Danville Public Library. There he is head of audio-visual and

is in charge of the film series and library website.

Boedicker has sent gratis DVD copies of “Revolting” to area libraries; it’s also available at That’s Rentertainment in Campustown. He and his collaborators even put the movie on Blu-Ray.

He might show it later this year at the Danville library, but no further public screenings are planned.

A member of the Champaign Movie Makers, Boedicker received help from many of that club’s members in making “Revolting.”

Jon Michael Hill is a naturally gifted actor; he feels comfortable on stage and in front of a camera. In “Detroit 1-8-7,” he plays a rookie detective. The episodes are largely shot with hand-held cameras (enough already). Like most cop dramas, the terse dialogue gives obvious clues as to how the detectives will investigate their murder cases.

The hippest part of “Detroit 1-8-7” is that it’s actually shot in Detroit.

Powers wrote “To the Measures Fall,” published in the Oct. 18 issue of *The New Yorker*, in second person, singular and female, to boot. That’s hard to pull off, but, of course, he succeeds.

The story tells of a woman’s relationship with a book she finds in 1963, during her junior year abroad at the University of York, in “an old Saxon market town whose name you will remember as almost certainly having an ‘m’ in it.”

It tells of her relationship to the novel through the decades, and it really gets at how many of us (should I say you?) relate to novels through all of life’s changes.

“It’s something that I wrote for a stand-up reading out at Stanford — a one-off, not related to the current novel,” Powers told me by e-mail. “That one is developing nicely, and I’m enjoying myself. I will be at it for a while longer, though, and don’t have a publication date yet.”

News-Gazette staff writer Melissa Merli can be reached at 351-5367 or mmerli@news-gazette.com. Her blog, *Art and About*, can be found at www.news-gazette.com/blogs/art-about.