



"Evenhanded" Mike Jones can't write Texas out of screenplays

Although Mike Jones has been a resident of the Big Apple since he graduated from NYU's film program in the early 1990s, he unhesitatingly admits he can't seem to "write Texas out" of the screenplays he creates.

So it is with *EvenHand*, the story of two cops who as partners, struggle to find meaning in their work, their lives and each other. *EvenHand* takes place in the small, fictional south Texas city of Lovisa, a setting not too different from some of the neighborhoods of San Antonio, Jones' hometown and the backdrop for the production of the film this past spring.

Jones initially went to NYU to study cinematography, and while there, discovered he enjoyed writing. After graduation, he worked as a writer-director on shorts and industrials, served on the senior editorial staff at *Filmmaker Magazine*, and has been a contributor to other print and online industry publications.

All the while, he "watched a lot of movies and read a lot of books," cultivating his sense of story and character. He is particularly in awe of writers like Horton Foote (*Tender Mercies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*), who weave complex character portraits with their stories.

Oddly enough, Jones' idea for *EvenHand* was inspired by the reality-based television program, *Cops*. While the show is known for documenting the frequently sensational actions of law officers as they apprehend offenders, occasionally, Jones claims, it's possible to glimpse the individual behind the shield. The answer to the "what's behind the shield" question is what piqued his writer's imagination.

Jones agreed to work with New York-based Cypress Films, an award-winning

independent television and feature production company established in 1987 by Joseph Pierson and John Glascoe (*Harris Bergeron*, *Julian Poe*, *Cherry*), in getting the *EvenHand* script produced. In the summer of 2000, director Joseph Pierson first visited San Antonio to explore the possibility of mounting the 35mm production there. He was so favorably impressed by what he saw and learned about the resources available (courtesy the San Antonio Film Commission), he never gave another thought to shooting elsewhere.

To lens the film, Pierson and Glascoe secured a commitment from cinematographer Tim Orr, a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts cinematography program and recently acclaimed for his work on the critically well-received 2000 indie *George Washington*. They tapped San Antonio-based Fernando Cano (*All the Pretty Horses*, *Barbacoa*) as line producer.

Fast-forward to the Alamo city spring 2001, where a crew of mostly local pros led by Pierson, Orr and Cano, pull together for the 27-day shoot. According to Pierson, he was "quite pleased with the contributions by the local crew and cast members." He speaks particularly highly of the office of San Antonio police chief Al Philippus, the contingent of officers who worked to lend an air of authenticity to the production - performing as extras and as consultants to lead actors Bill Dawes and Bill Sage in their roles as the partnered cops - and the folks in the East Side

neighborhoods who provided support and cooperation to the production.

Mike Jones was unable to be on the set to witness production of his first feature script in his hometown. But with good reason. He's been busy with other work - rewriting a project for Matt Dillon to direct (*Under the Banyon Trees*), penning the robot-themed *Automata* for Columbia and Stan Winston Productions, and preparing to direct *Miller*, his own South Texas *Death of a Salesman* story starring Chris Cooper (*American Beauty*, *Lone Star*), scheduled to roll this fall.

EvenHand is now being edited in NYC. Pierson is targeting completion of postproduction in time for a fall premiere and anticipates a screening in San Antonio. Fans and others wanting to keep up with *EvenHand* as it progresses can visit www.cypressfilms.com. In addition to more background info and updates, Pierson is posting his production diary, so anyone can vicariously experience life on the *EvenHand* set.

EvenHand-Cast: Bill Dawes, Bill Sage, Ruth Osuna, Lee Stringer, Io Tillett Wright, Irene Pena, Hector Garcia. **ExProd:** Jon Glascoe; **Prod.:** Fernando Cano; **Dir:** Joseph Pierson; **Scr:** Mike Jones; **DP:** Tim Orr; **1st AD:** James Borrego; **PrdCoord:** Cristina Houston; **PrdDsgn:** Gary Ledyard; **Snd:** Allen Green; **NY Cstg:** Kim Moarefi; **SA Cstg:** Susan Jasso; **LocMgr:** Larry Sanchez; **Gfr:** Greg Ridge; **KeyGrp:** Robert Reynolds; **Cstm:** Yvonne Wilburn; **Hair/MkUp:** Erin Doyle; **Publ:** Lisa Russell.



Dawes and Sage, cops in the hood.