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## Short Film Festival

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### Actor appreciates artistic freedom in making short films

DEBORAH NICOL • THE DESERT SUN • AUGUST 21, 2007

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What began as a favor to a friend became a labor of love.

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Actor John Hannah ("The Mummy," "Four Weddings and a Funeral") thought he would help his friend by contributing his talents to John Comerford's first directing effort.

Perhaps a short film would allow Comerford to gain a better understanding of the filmmaking process.

"But I was really taken aback with how unexpected John's script was given that I've known him so well and for so long," Hannah told The Desert Sun via e-mail.

"When I read it, there was no doubt it spoke to me and hopefully to others of generational misunderstandings."

"Stone" centers on a quiet day between three generations. As a grandfather teaches his small grandson the skills of the brick-laying trade, the grandfather's son (Hannah) confronts his father as to lessons learned in childhood.

The blue collar father holds a grudge against his son for preferring to keep his hands clean of hard labor.

With the third Mummy film on the horizon, Hannah appreciated the ability to focus on a smaller production, but he said the preparation for the drama was no different than for a feature length film.

"You're there to help tell a story and you do it one bit at a time," Hannah explained. "Unless you're Daniel Day Lewis, I think you're entitled to assume you have a great deal in common with the person you're pretending to be."

Hannah believes that shorts allow for an education of cast and crew without any meddling by interfering forces.

He remarks, "(Shorts) do not have to compete with our overly corporate idea of why we make things, why we tell stories and how we share our storytelling heritage."

Regarding filmmaking in the actor's British homeland, Hannah asserts, "We are blessed with talent, not just in Scotland but Ireland and England."

He clarifies, "Unfortunately, no one has any spare cash for films, and those that do follow the obvious, well-worn path of commerce."

Hannah regrets that hard work does not guarantee success for British filmmakers.

"Our filmmakers struggle constantly to find ways of expressing themselves," he said.

"And when they can stand the shortsighted, pseudo-mogul posturing no more, they go to Hollywood so they can at least make another film."

As Hannah reprises his role in the next Mummy film, its success should allow him the freedom to explore the creative endeavors he values.

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#### "STONE"

How well do our occupations define us when we would rather define ourselves?

Filmmakers John Comerford and Vincent Hunter tear down the rocky relationship between a Scottish father and son. For each crag in the grandfather's face, there is the indication of a lifetime of toil and the story that he has created to make each scar represent a more adventurous life.

John Hannah guardedly portrays the jaded son who attempts to ruin the facade for his own bairn as his father weaves yet another yarn - something he feels to have created a false sense of reality in his own childhood.

As the grandfather teaches the next generation how to build a bench, each flawed stone represents the years of a worn man who appreciates the finished product and refuses to dismiss it for its imperfections. "Stone" is visually elegant and skillfully acted.

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