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CONTACT

Melanie Scholten
616-786-2491 (day)
media@waterfrontfilm.org

**Offbeat Romantic Comedy, "Qwerty", Winning Script
of 1st Waterfront Film Festival Screenplay Competition**

Two wrongs somehow make a right when not-so-lovable loser Marty Huckhound, a temp working department store security, meets Zoe Rezillo, a DMV worker ostracized by her family and co-workers, and an offbeat romance develops.

The script for *Qwerty*, written by Juliet McDaniel, was chosen by a panel of industry judges as the winner of the first screenwriting competition hosted by the Waterfront Film Festival. Professional actors will present the script as a staged reading on Saturday, June 11, during this year's seventh annual festival held in Saugatuck, Michigan. The reading will be followed by a private reception honoring the winner, finalists and semi-finalists, hosted by the Writers Guild of America, West. Many thanks also go out to the screenplay competition sponsors, Final Draft and Creative Screenwriting magazine.

A screenplay competition was added to the Waterfront Film Festival roster of events due in part to the increasing popularity of the screenwriting seminars of past festivals. Frequently asked questions of industry guests at these panels were "How can I break into the business"; "How can I get my script onto the desks of agents and producers?"; and "How do I develop 'industry connections'?" It was also felt that a competition of this nature was a way to discover and promote talented new voices from the four Lake Michigan "waterfront" states (Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin).

Dina Marie Chapman, a working screenwriter and member of the festival's film selection committee, and former Hollywood development executive Carrie Cook were the competition's co-chairs. "In rating the screenplays," says Chapman, "consideration was given to a number of elements – story, structure, characters, dialogue and writing."

The judges were impressed with the caliber of scripts submitted to the competition. Josh Shader is co-president of Terra Firma Films, a Universal Studios-based production company and one of the seven industry judges for the competition. "After hearing wonderful things about the festival for years, I'm thrilled to be involved for the first time. The screenplay competition adds a welcome dimension to an already well-rounded festival. After all, the script is the first and most important part of the filmmaking process. The entries were certainly impressive."

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Nurturing talent is a focus dear to his heart. "Hopefully this contest will provide the necessary exposure to further the careers of these talented writers," says Shader. "The ultimate goal, of course, would be to one day premiere a film at Waterfront that was first discovered in the screenplay competition."

Qwerty is winner Juliet McDaniel's fourth screenplay. When asked what inspired this screenplay McDaniel explained, "The whole reason I wrote *Qwerty* is because I'm sick of seeing fluffy romantic comedies starring insanely beautiful people and a contrived plot with the proverbial walk off into the sunset ending. I like characters who live on the edges and are pretty darn messed up rather than just pretty."

Born in Minnesota, raised in Arizona, and now residing in suburban Chicago, McDaniel harbors a secret wish that the Coen brothers, Ethan and Joel, will set a movie in the Windy City. She is a graduate of Lake Forest College and has an MA in Writing from DePaul University.

In addition to the staged reading, Kalan/Perrone Management, MTV Films, Alphaville, New Regency and Anonymous Content have all agreed to read the winning screenplay. During the festival McDaniel will meet with a literary agent or manager, will be introduced to numerous industry guests. She will also receive lodging and a VIP all-access badge for the duration of the festival.

The other two competition finalists are James Ziolkowski for *Her Name Was Tuesday*; and Aaron Brzezina for *The Magician*.

James Ziolkowski grew up in the Chicago area and currently resides in Mt. Prospect, Illinois. This self-taught screenplay writer was named one of the Top 50 Writers of 2004 by Red Inkworks. *Her Name Was Tuesday*, the second of three screenplays he has completed, is a film about a slacker warehouse worker and defending ping pong champ who is the envy of his married buddy as he lives five different lives with five different women, spending one day a week with each...until he meets the girl of his dreams. This script has already been awarded First Place and received additional finalist awards in other competitions. Ziolkowski names Larry David as one of his main influences and is a silent movie buff.

Aaron Brzezina was born in Detroit and graduated last year from the University of Michigan where he studied screenwriting. He currently lives in Birmingham, Michigan and works at an area advertising agency, saving money for a move out West. In his free time Brzezina writes as much as possible. *The Magician*, a story about an out-of-work stage magician searching for his mysteriously missing father in Vegas, discovers that magic might be real. This is Brzezina's second screenplay.

Seven semifinalists were: *Andy Warhol's Dead* by Cheryl Compton and Chris Alan Young, who were both born in Indiana and attended Indiana University; *The Art of Revenge* by Michigan native and Michigan State alumnus Suneil Singh; *Pelican* by Jak Mercer of Eaton Rapids, Michigan; *Wiglaf's Saga* by Adam Kline of Chicago, Illinois; *Under My Skin* by Rex C. White of Zeeland, Michigan; *The Road Rise Up* by University of Michigan alumnus Paula DiSante of St. Clair Shores, Michigan; and *One* by Randall Peterson, a Western Michigan University graduate from Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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Waterfront Film Festival is supported by the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information visit www.waterfrontfilm.org

Saugatuck, located midway between Detroit and Chicago is considered one of the top 20 arts and crafts destinations in the U.S. This charming village known as the Art Coast of Michigan is nestled in the beautiful white sand dunes of Lake Michigan and curled around an inland bay. With its beautiful beaches, diverse shopping, eclectic cuisine and nightlife – all within easy access of festival venues - the area's relaxed atmosphere has charmed visitors for nearly a century. For more information, visit the official festival Website at www.waterfrontfilm.org.

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