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Dating on Wheels

Short film provides glimpse into online dating scene for those with disabilities

Los Angeles (January 17, 2013) – *Rolling Romance* is a dark comedy about sex, drugs and disability. The film focuses on two people, Orson and Janice, who meet online and decide to go on a date. It sounds like a typical date movie except that both Orson and Janice have muscular dystrophy.

Orson, played by David Holt, is a sarcastic yet naïve guy who ends up on one of the worst and funniest dates of his life with the sweet, yet rebellious Janice, played by Emily Goss.

Written by screenwriter Michael Carnick, *Rolling Romance* aims to show that people with disabilities struggle with finding love just like their non-disabled counterparts.

“I want audiences to know that disabled or not, everyone is searching for love and companionship. We go on bad dates, we get burned, we rebound and we have the same experiences everyone else has,” he says.

Like many people, Carnick has tried online dating in the past without much success.

“The script was inspired by a real life encounter with online dating. The event was so surreal that I knew it had to be experienced by others. At the moment it happened, it was like a part of me was sitting outside myself and enjoying the schadenfreude of the whole thing. I mean, it's two people in electric wheelchairs, dating. The whole thing was just so unusual, but at the same time very familiar,” says Carnick.

Carnick was born with a rare condition called congenital fiber-type disproportion. The condition manifests as a non-progressive form of muscle weakness, similar to the characters in his film. It has confined Carnick to a wheelchair for most of his life.

However, Carnick hasn't let his physical limitations stop him from pursuing his dreams. While studying Theatre and Dance at the University of California, San Diego, his feature film, *Who's Driving Doug?* won first place at the 50th Anniversary Samuel Goldwyn Writing Awards. Judges for the awards included Pulitzer Prize winner A. Scott Berg, Creative Artists Agency partner Robert Bookman and New York Times best-selling author Johnathan Kellerman. Carnick was the first undergrad to receive the award.

After graduating from UCSD, Carnick went on to get his MFA in Creative Writing for the Performing Arts from the University of California, Riverside. Today, he continues to write screenplays that focus on disability awareness and how it feels to be a minority.

“Being disabled, I am very conscious about how others perceive me. When people meet me for the first time, they are sometimes unsure of how to interact with me. I believe that humor is a great way to bond people together. If I can get people to feel comfortable at laughing at a disabled person's bad date, then I think I've done a little bit to bridge the gap.”

Rolling Romance producer Melissa Harkness is one of Carnick's strongest supporters.

“Mike is one of the funniest writers I've ever met, but also one of the most heartfelt. He's so open and honest about disability and dating. It's rare to find a writer who can write so frankly about his experiences,” she says.

Harkness met Carnick while both were in the MFA program at UCR. They had planned to work on a film together in school but the right opportunity never presented itself. Then, along came *Rolling Romance*.

“Michael was looking for a director for the film and asked me if I knew anyone. I read the script and thought, “This is fantastic, I'd love to make this happen,” said Harkness.

To direct, Harkness brought on David Conley, a seasoned cinematographer and editor who has worked on a wide range of features, short films, music videos, commercials, promotional materials and behind the scenes. His most notable projects include *Les Miserables*, the *Twilight* series and *Bounty Killer*.

“This is such a human and relatable story. It's dark at times, but it has this wonderful comedic element. I had not yet met Michael when I read the script, but I loved his balance of humor and drama. It's what sold me on the project,” says Conley.

Not only does Conley bring a wealth of film experience to the project, he also brings his own camera equipment, a big bonus for a short film being funded almost exclusively by Carnick's family, and donations from the Kickstarter campaign that launched earlier this month.

“Kickstarter makes it simple to be part of this wonderful project. All it takes is a dollar, and you're involved,” Harkness says.

For those who want a preview of the film and Carnick's comedy, the Kickstarter campaign provides a short video where Carnick, Harkness and Conley dish about their online dating experiences. People can also like the film on Facebook or follow it on Twitter (@RollingRomance1).

“This film puts two people with disabilities in lead roles. They aren't the sidekicks, they're the leads, and that's one of the major themes of this film, that disability doesn't, and shouldn't, define who people are,” says Conley.

Rolling Romance is scheduled to film later this month. For more information about the film, cast and crew, visit www.rollingromancefilm.com.

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