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Camera focused on campus

by Pat Kiernan

Welcome to anywhere.

HUB could be a suburban shopping mall in Toronto.

Varsity Arena could double as any small town rink on the junior hockey circuit.

The Dentistry-Pharmacy Building might take on the look of a European Boarding School.

With convincing cosmetic changes, and appropriate signs, film makers can make the buildings at the U of A look like they're almost anywhere.

The University isn't in danger of becoming Hollywood North, but cameras on campus are becoming a routine sight.

Meg Clarke is the University's Public Affairs Director. She says the provincial government has been actively promoting Alberta as a location for film makers. "We have been told that the likelihood is that we will receive increasing requests for professional film companies to use pieces of the University during filming."

The university campus has been used as a film location on several locations in the past. And campus was prominently featured this summer, as scenes from the television movie "Small Sacrifices" were filmed outside the Law Building. The modern, concrete building on the eastern perimeter of campus was chosen by producers for transformation to the "United States Federal Building."

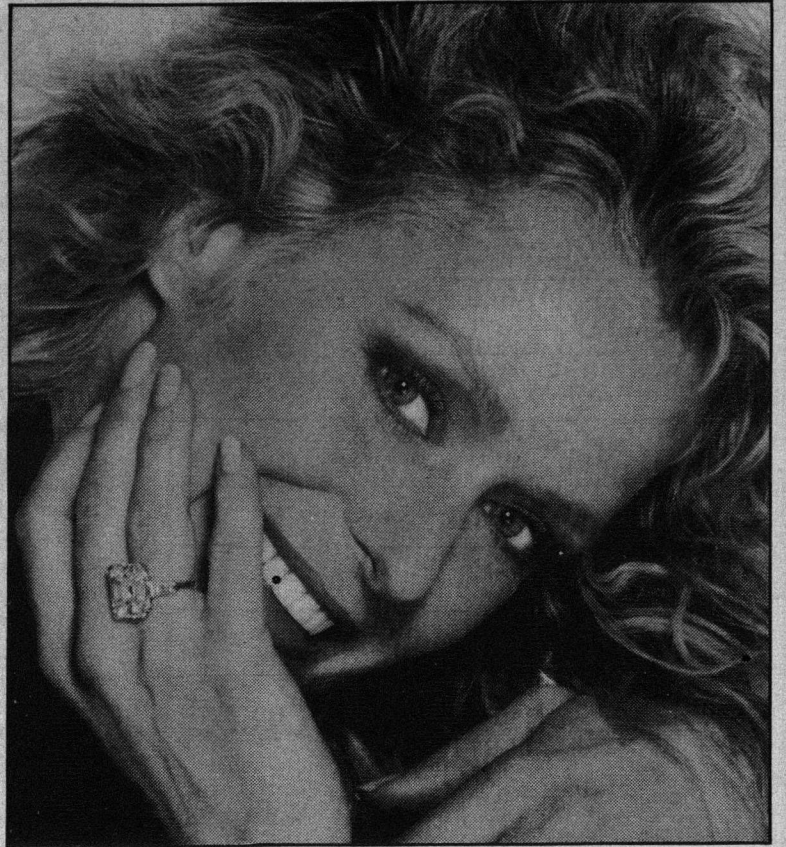
The 4 hour mini-series-starring Farrah Fawcett — was shot in Edmonton, but is set in Eugene, Oregon. Producers felt the exterior of the Law Building looked more suitable than the actual Law Courts Building downtown.

Doug Steeden is the project manager with Allarcom — the Edmonton based production company which owns ITV and co-produced "Small Sacrifices." He says the campus is often thought of as a potential film location, but notes that University Administration's "prime concern is that the shoot doesn't interfere with day to day operations." Still, he reports that his company's experience at the University has been positive.

Clarke's position is simple, "we're going to try to be as helpful as we can," but she stresses that education comes first.

A major production like "Small Sacrifices" pays a major fee to the University. A base rate of \$1500 per day applies, plus any incremental cost incurred by the University.

Clarke says the University requires



Farrah was here!

that security guards be on duty when shooting is in progress. Campus Security officers cost 28 dollars an hour. Clean up and repair costs are deducted from a damage deposit.

"Each project is different," says Steeden. "A location manager will come in with the production, and scout the town to find which areas will be appropriate for a script."

Location managers select a building for its appearance, and aggressively negotiate for permission to use it. The University is cooperative, according to Steeden, but a location isn't chosen simply because of a helpful landlord. If the right location is found — regardless of who owns it — producers will do everything in their power to get access.

Once a location has been picked, a fee is negotiated, based on several factors. The more disruptive a shoot is to the daily business at a location, the more expensive the location will be. "Small Sacrifices" was shot in August, so campus was relatively quiet at the time.

The producers spared no expense in setting up the Law Building for the shoot. United States Postal Service mailboxes were set up outside, and the Sun and Journal newspaper boxes were changed to USA Today and The Oregonian.

"The chances are good that no

film company is going to be using the U of A as the U of A," says Clarke. "We know that they're going to be pretending that this is some other location."

"It's not lucrative to us... we see this as public service more than anything else. It's part of our role in trying to be supportive of community activities."

Clarke, and other university administrators, read a script prior to allowing a production on campus, "to make sure it's the kind of film that we wouldn't be embarrassed having the University of Alberta listed in the credits."

The biggest problem with renting campus to film makers is the amount of time university staff members have to spend coordinating the production. Clarke cautions that the "primary purpose isn't to make movies." If the University isn't satisfied that classes and research can continue without interruption, an agreement will not be signed.

As long as the University is able to accommodate film makers, Allarcom's Steeden believes the campus will be making more big screen appearances. "Edmonton is still young in the film industry," he says, adding that the people who own the locations are usually receptive, and enthusiastic about having their moment on the silver screen.

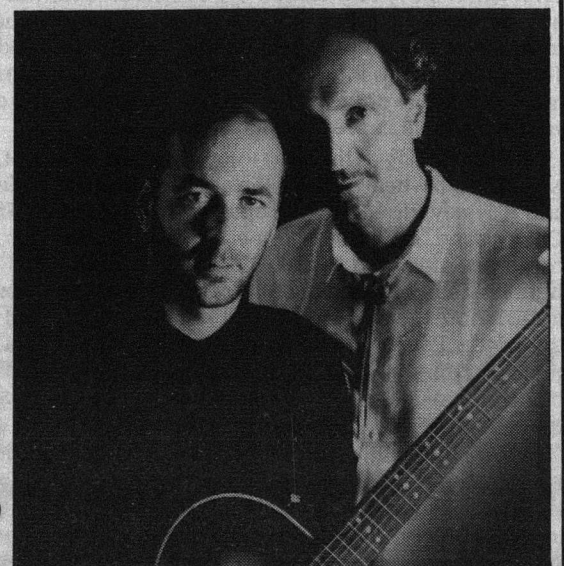
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