

Cover Story

His life is in 'Ruins'

Steven Spielberg is a fan ... which may have something to do with why Carter Smith (Mt. Ararat H.S. Class of '89) was chosen to direct the new horror/suspense flick, 'The Ruins.'

By STEPHANIE BOUCHARD
Staff Writer

IF YOU GO

"THE RUINS" opens Friday at: Brunswick 10, Cinemagic Grand, Falmouth 10, Saco 12, Westbrook 16. Rated R for strong violence and gruesome images, language and some sexuality and nudity. Go to www.ruinsmovie.com for information.

novel of the new century."

It makes perfect sense to Luana Smith that King – a man her son idolized as a child – would want to know that a local boy (he's 36, but you know how mothers are) is directing the film version of a novel he endorsed.

As for Carter himself, well, he's a little more subdued about the matter.

"I've always wanted to make films," he said matter-of-factly on the phone from California. "I've always wanted to tell stories visually, whether it was photo or film."

A 1989 graduate of Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham, Smith

didn't pursue film in college or initially as a career. "The Ruins" is his debut as the director of a full-length feature film for a major studio.

Instead, Smith went to the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York for fashion design, and quickly realized he was more interested in fashion photography.

His work as a professional fashion photographer has appeared in *Vogue*, *GQ* and *W* magazines. He has also directed ad campaigns for Lancome, Tommy Hilfiger and Tiffany's.

A few years ago, Smith read a short story by Scott Treleaven and decided he could bring the end-of-innocence story of teenage homosexuality and taboo behavior to film. The 36-minute result, "Bugcrush," which Smith filmed at Mt. Ararat High School, won the 2006 jury prize for short filmmaking at the Sundance Film Festival.

Movie industry producers and financiers noticed. "Steven Spielberg himself saw 'Bugcrush' and loved it," Smith said. "That's what got me this job."

Smith had just finished reading "The Ruins" when his agent sent him the script for the movie. Having the screenplay land in his lap at just that moment seemed pre-ordained.

As with "Bugcrush," Smith felt in his bones that he could tell the story of "The Ruins" – about a group of vacationing friends who encounter evil at an archaeological dig – better than anyone else. He just needed to convince the executives at DreamWorks that he was the best choice. "I really had to fight hard to get it as a first timer," he said.

Fighting hard meant making presentations in round after round after round of meetings. The process took several months, but after a final meeting with Spielberg, Smith was given the go-ahead.

With his cast and crew, Smith went to Australia for filming in May through July 2007. (His parents visited him on the set. "It was such a thrill," declared his mother.) Post-production was done in Los Angeles,

SMITH

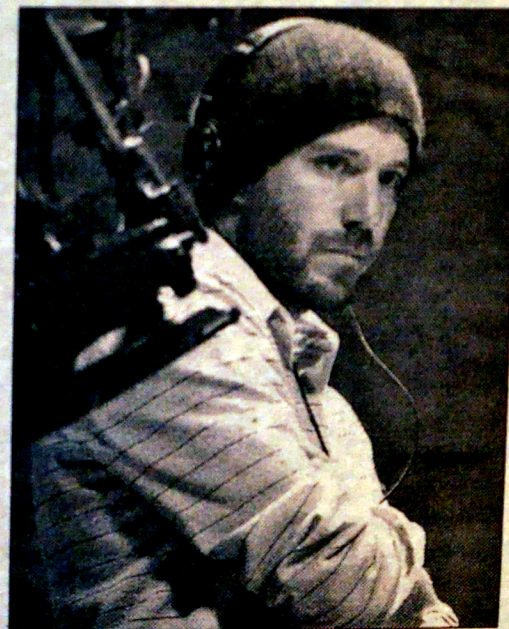
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where the New York City-based Smith lived at the Chateau Mar-mont for more than a year.

Now that the movie is completed, Smith is looking forward to returning to fashion photography but is also developing other film projects. He's taking his time deciding which films to pursue.

"You really need to make sure, before you start a project, that it's really something you want to spend your life with, because it becomes your life," he said.

Before Smith plunges back into the worlds of fashion and moviemaking, he gets to bask in his accomplishment. "The Ruins" premiered in Los Angeles



DreamWorks

Carter Smith on the set of "The Ruins." Smith also directed "Bugcrush," which he filmed at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham and which won a prize at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival.

on Wednesday.

Smith's parents are planning a big bash at their home on Friday for friends and family. Carter won't be at the party, but that didn't stop his mother from inviting King. (She hadn't received his RSVP as of last week.)

The Smiths have also pre-purchased a block of tickets to a screening of "The Ruins" at Regal Cinema in Brunswick so they and their guests can watch the big-screen debut of the local boy together.

"To see 'Director: Carter Smith' up on the screen is pretty special," said Luana Smith. Oh, Mom.

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