

# Lights, Camera, Action! Local Filmmaker Shines Spotlight on NK

By Mike Dynon

Remember the good old days? That's what filmmaker Keith Brown will be doing this summer when he returns to his native North Kingstown to shoot *Tough All Over*. The production will be Brown's thesis film to complete a two-year program for a Master of Fine Arts in Film Production from Boston University.

Brown wrote the script for *Tough All Over*, which will look at the awkward time in a sixth-grade boy's life when he is dealing with his first crush, his first school dance, and the terrors of junior high gym class. The story is set in North Kingstown in 1986, and Brown will direct and film



ON LOCATION: Filmmaker Keith Brown gives directions to his cast and crew. He will be filming in NK this summer.

the movie this summer on location at Davisville Middle School.

This project will be a true homecoming for the director, whose parents, Natalie and Dennis (a long-time teacher at DMS), and grandmother, Judy Woll, reside here. Brown attended DMS before graduating from North Kingstown High School and going on to earn a bachelor's degree in art from the University of Rhode Island.

Brown recalls he began making films as soon as he was old enough to use his parents' Super 8 camera. While at URI, his talent began to bloom. He produced, directed, and edited three films, including *Moving Pictures*, which looked at how his grandfather influenced his life and art. The film was chosen First Place Student Experimental Film at the Columbus, Ohio, International Film and Video Festival, and First Place Experimental Film and Best of

Festival at URI's Visualizations Film Festival.

The festival in Ohio was the first public screening of Brown's creativity. "It was amazing to be sitting in this place far from Rhode Island and have my grandfather's voice come out of the speakers," he recalls. "To have people respond to your work, it's amazing."

Since joining the BU master's program, Brown has been involved in producing 16 short films. He also serves as a graduate assistant, helping to teach film production classes, organizing film screening events, and maintaining BU's film and television web site. These opportunities were important to him.

"You don't need to go to a film school to learn filmmaking, but I wanted to teach," Brown states. "Even when I was taking courses at URI, it was nice to be in a group of people who were working together and being creative. It's interesting to see all the different ways films can be made. The BU program is filled with 16 people from all over the place, and it's interesting to get their perspectives. It's fulfilling to see where students began and where they finished."

Brown would like to continue teaching, and he's certain he'll always be involved with filmmaking.

"It's what I love to do, and even if I'm doing something else to support myself, I'll always be making films. I enjoy the creative part."

"My thesis film will be the biggest thing I've done," continues Brown. "It's exciting and frightening at the same time, but everyone in the program is supportive, and I have so much help from people here [at BU] and back home. A lot of people really believe in the project and have come to me to say they want to work on my film, so that's a good feeling."

"This project is combining all the things that are close to me—family, friends, and let's not forget the nostalgia and music of the '80s."

Brown feels that setting *Tough All Over* in 1986 will enable him to reach a variety of people. "If the viewing audience is in their 30s, they will be able to laugh at the situations in the film because they will remember going through the same things when they were younger. If the audience happens to be the same age as the characters in the film, they will be able to find humor in their current situations."

Careful attention will be paid to the clothing and hairstyles of the time, as well as to the music. To incorporate a true Rhode Island flavor, Brown has received permission from local rock music legend John Cafferty (of Beaver Brown Band fame) to use his 1986 hit song, also titled "Tough All Over."

"In my film, the music is almost as important as the characters," Brown explains. "It really defines the time and also says a lot about what the kids that grew up during the period were thinking and feeling."

The process of creating a film involves logistics as much as creativity. There's the matter of paying for items

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such as the 20 rolls of 16mm film (at \$150 each) that Brown will need. All films produced at Boston University are personally financed, and Brown has received one grant from the Antonio Cirino Memorial Fund through the Rhode Island Foundation. He is still seeking tax-deductible donations to cover other expenses.

Finding the right actors was another task. "The audition and casting process was grueling. We saw about 80 kids. The children cast in the film were chosen not only for their acting ability, but also for their specific look."

After narrowing the choices, Brown called back the best candidates

to pair up and read scenes. "Once you see what you've written come to life, it's exciting."

One cast member is Patrick Dolan, a 13-year-old North Kingstown resident. Dolan will portray Andy, a close friend of the lead character, Nathan. And cast member Mike Mooty will add more local flavor. He was one of Brown's North Kingstown High School teachers who will play, naturally, a teacher in the film.

Brown expects to complete the editing of his film by the end of the year. To learn more about *Tough All Over*, visit Keith Brown's web site at <http://people.bu.edu/kbro/tough.html>.

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