

And now for something completely different:



Student bases a film on experiences at Camp Kadimah



Since the short film *Bunked!* takes place at night, the cast and crew filmed for five straight nights.



Jonathan Oore, left, was flown in from Halifax to play Johnny, a camp counsellor. Adam, a camper, is played by Corey Lof.



Carrie Skurka, played by Laurie Campbell, is one of the love interests in the film *Bunked!*

By RITA POLIAKOV
Staff Reporter

It took Orlee-Rose Strauss five nights to film her final project for Ryerson University's film program. She barely slept, the weather didn't co-operate and the camera broke down.

"Anything you could think of that could go wrong went wrong," said Strauss, who will be graduating from Ryerson this year. "We would start [filming] at around 6:30 to 7 p.m. and we would shoot until 7 a.m., until the sun came up... because the whole film took place at night."

Her final product, called *Bunked!*, is a movie loosely based on her experiences at Camp Kadimah, a Jewish summer camp in Halifax where she has worked for five summers.

"I had worked there last summer, I was talking with a friend of mine from camp... about how I had no idea what I would do [for my final project]. He said, 'You've got to do a movie about this. About camp.' It's very special to us," she said.

In the short film, which Strauss wrote and directed, a counsellor on night watch interferes with a camper's attempts to sneak out and meet a girl he likes.

"I started writing the script at the end of August and I wrote it over

September," she said. "It's a very simple story, it's essentially two boy-meets-girl stories. To get to the heart of the story, I had to really develop these two main characters and find out why they were different from other males."

The story and script took several months to finish, and went through many rewrites.

"The script went through about 10 drafts. I have a very challenging group of friends at Ryerson," she said. "The story was a definite challenge."

So was the casting. While trying to find someone to play Johnny, a camp counsellor, Strauss decided to fly Jonathan Oore, a friend of hers, out from Halifax for the part.

Preproduction for *Bunked!* took about six or seven weeks, but the most difficult component was the actual filming, which took place at a camp in Fergus, Ont.

"We essentially had to drive about 70 people to and from this campsite... Just getting people there and feeding them and keeping them warm and happy for five days was an incredible challenge," she said, adding that some of the crew drove back to Toronto for school and then would spend the night filming in Fergus.

Strauss, who was inspired by the 1979 movie *Meatballs*, decided to make her film a comedy, which in itself presented a problem.

"Writing a script that's funny not only to you but to other people is a challenge. You want to get other people's opinions and figure out what your demographic is," she said. "I decided I wanted to do a comedy that... was more subtle, like *Meatballs*. I took inspiration from that in terms of my comedy."

Because her comedy is subtle, Strauss was careful when working with the actors.

"[I was] working with actors to try and have them understand the comedic timing and pacing of the piece," she said, adding that they improvised lines while filming. "Thankfully, my actors were fantastic. I did a lot of improv with them, and they were hilarious on their own."

For Strauss, it was crucial to get every detail just right in her movie, especially since it reflected her own experiences at camp.

"The challenge in trying to recreate this experience in my life is that I wanted to really do it justice, to portray the experiences I had at camp and really have those come off on screen," she said. "It was really important to me not only that the story was good but that people can get a sense of what [I loved] about camp... [Camp Kadimah] means so much to me."

Strauss went to Camp Kadimah as a camper from 2000 to 2003, then returned in 2005 as a staff member. This summer, she'll be acting as a section head for the camp.

While *Bunked!*'s story isn't a Jewish one, the setting reflects her culture.

"We have our fair share of Jewish-sounding names... then we have a little art direction, one of our campers wears an Israeli army shirt," she said. "We didn't want to hit people over the head with it. It's very subtle."

Her film, which is still in the editing process, is about 13 minutes long and will debut in Ryerson's film festival in May, although Strauss plans on entering it in several film festivals throughout North America.

While pitching her film to professors at Ryerson, Strauss won the Kodak Film Award, which came with \$1,000, and the William F. White International Equipment Award, a grant for renting filming equipment.

Although Strauss loves filmmaking, she didn't originally apply to Ryerson's film program.

Or any film program.

Instead, she spent a year in Israel after high school, then applied to Ryerson's new-media program.

"I wasn't crazy about it. I had no idea what was going on in the program. I was very lost. I knew it wasn't quite right for me," she said.

A professor suggested she switch to film, and Strauss hasn't looked back since.

"[I like] everything. Pre-production, the process of telling the story... working with a group of talented and creative people to help actualize the story," she said. "It's the directorial process that I love the most. It's basically finding the heart of the story through the actors."