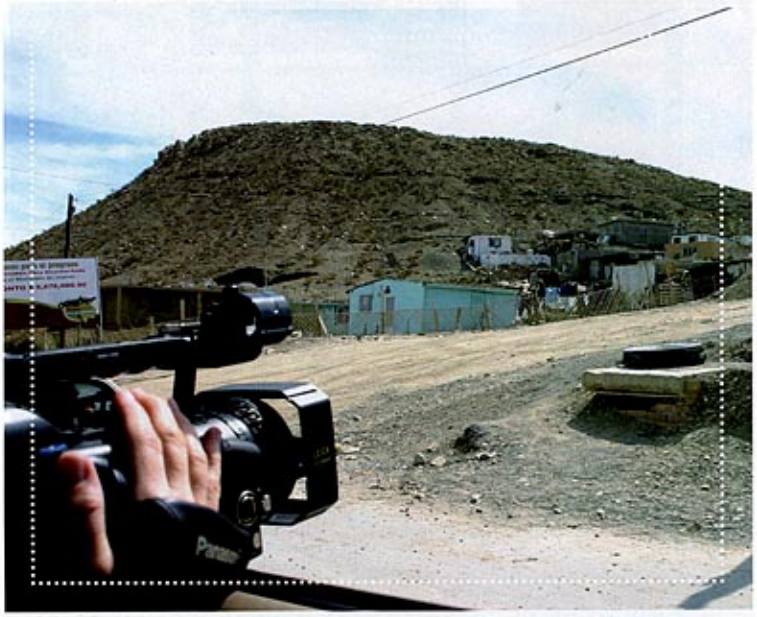
BY JOHNPAUL BURGESS



# FILM BUZZ 2007!

## All the rumors are true: Multiple Minnesota film projects are coming to a theater near you.

Since the Hollywood productions *North Country* and *A Prairie Home Companion* were shot in Minnesota, along with local filmmaker Ali Selim's *Sweet Land*, it would seem the state is regaining its reputation as a cinematic hub. Back in the mid-'90s, the state was abuzz with big-name productions such as *The Mighty Ducks*, *Grumpy Old Men* and *Feeling Minnesota*, making Minnesota a kind of Hollywood backlot, with one of the most active film commissions in the U.S. But then, the film industry quit calling, and in the past 10 years, few big studio pictures have been shot here until this recent renaissance. Unlike that boom-bust cycle, however, our local independent film scene has never wavered. In the last few years, more indie projects have been in the works than ever before. Here's what's going down this year:

Producer **CHRISTINE WALKER** (*American Splendor*, *Factotum*) has teamed up with first-time director **GEORGINA LIGHTNING** (co-founder, Tribal Alliance [illegible]ns, acting and casting credits on *Dreamkeepers*, *Smoke Sig[illegible]* *an America*. Set in a fictitious Mi[illegible]ool, the film centers on S[illegible]uake. Principal photog[illegible]

[illegible]lligently told story, unde[illegible]ng premieres and runni[illegible] calls "Romeo and Juliet from Ned Beatty, Selim[illegible]ota novelist Pete Hautman's *Godless*, the story of a skeptical teenager who founds a new religion with a water tower as its spiritual foundation.

**PATRICK COYLE**—who wrote and directed *Detective Fiction*, about a man who begins writing after he's court-ordered into sobriety—is equally busy. Since Coyle played Martin in *Sweet Land*, his new script, *Into Temptation*, has been optioned. The story follows a priest obsessed with finding a woman who confessed a sin she has yet to commit. Currently fundraising, Coyle hopes to begin production this spring.

**JAMIE A. LEE**, founder of visionaries filmworks, inc., and a former co-owner of Aquaries Media, crafts social-justice documentaries. Her recent *Green Green Water* (co-directed and produced with Dawn Mikkelson) examines social divisions among the Cree of Manitoba that are created when hydroelectric companies pressure the tribe for water rights. In March, Lee begins shooting *agua miel: Secrets of the Agave*, about women's cooperatives along the U.S.-Mexico border. Also on her to-do list: *Imagine*, a documentary about the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus on its Great Southern Sing Out Tour this past summer, soon to begin post-production (visionariesfilmworks.com).

**JOANNA KOHLER**, one of Lee's collaborators, is fresh off her recent endeavor, *Boxers*, which profiles the all-female Team Uppercut on its way to an international tournament. Through her company, Kohler Productions, Kohler says she aims to "build community energy around projects that confront power." Her GUERRILLA Tour, for instance, is a digital-media project in which audiences participate in open, facilitated discussions after screenings. Up next: a series of shorts that investigate community perceptions of public money (kohlerproductions.com).

**WILLIAM SCOTT REES** and **JOELLEN MARTINSON**, the collaborators behind Candy Eye Factory, continue their rapid-fire release of projects with *The Mallorys Go Black Market*, which depicts the selling of '80s-era clothing to unsuspecting foreign teenagers. Already screened in New York, the film premieres in the Midwest this year. Also raring for release is the short film *The Epicene*, which Rees describes as "about art stars/Greek gods/