

Haven receives critical acclaim amongst audiences

By Jane A. Green

Producer Robbie Brenner, after reading the script for Haven, told Caymanian Frank E. Flowers, writer and director, "I'll quit my job if you let me produce this movie."

Many people couldn't believe the person who had written Haven was only 24 years old.

Orlando Bloom (cast as Shy) was so taken by the script that he signed on to produce as well. He didn't, however, sign on to portray Fritz, the role he was initially offered. "I loved the script, but the role I most responded to was the character of Shy, who at the time was written as a young Caymanian kid about 15 years old," recalls Bloom, who was reluctant for Flowers to change the integrity of the script, but curious to see how he could do it.

"I was amazed. In literally 48 hours, Frank came back with another script in which Shy had redeveloped into a character I could play. I knew right then that if he could do something like that, I wanted to work with him."

At the time only 27 years old himself, Bloom also made his first foray in the producing role. "It was exciting to start at the bottom of a film and work your way through it, to really roll up your sleeves and get involved," he said. "It really made me emotionally connected to the

movie, so much so that it became part of me."

After seeing the movie tonight, I too, was astounded that such a complex story was so well told by such a filmmaker, and a producer/actor, both of whom were still a few years shy (no pun intended) of 30.

Let me state up front, I didn't attend the initial screening of Haven in 2004 at the Toronto International Film Festival so I'm unable to offer any comparisons of the earlier version of the film to the 98 minute version screened tonight. I've heard there's been some possible re-tooling and editing done since 2004. If so, the result is a tight, fast-paced multi-plot film replete with irony and more twists and turns than the complicated financial system of the island.

Flowers says he doesn't consider himself a historian or a sociologist, but he does know his way around the islands and a great deal about the rich texture of its culture.

That knowledge and experience is evident when watching the film, as we're shown various locations around Cayman, from glitzy vacation villas, to smoky food vendor stalls along unpaved roads, to the party spots where wealthy "off-shore visitors" come together with the island's underground drug/crime royalty to party, to a dusty schoolyard, to the humble



Haven, a film written and directed by Caymanian Frank E. Flowers, is already receiving critical acclaim. It is set for limited release, Friday, 15 September. Photo: Submitted

home of a fisherman.

The film is classic non-linear, multi-plot. The two stories, one a love story, the other a crime story, wind their way around each other in space, character,

and time.

While it would appear at first glance that Andrea (played beautifully by Zoë Saldana) and Shy, the main characters of the love story, have nothing in common with Carl Ridley (played well by Bill Paxton) and Mr. Allen (played by Stephen

Dillane with a brilliant sense of wit and white-collar villainy), one discovers, as the story progresses, that they, as well as other supporting characters in both stories, are all flawed, broken people.

Even though they are surrounded by the beauty of a tropical paradise, the refuge they seek appears to be just beyond their grasp.

"What attracted me to the story is that all of the characters in it are broken, and subject to the tragic consequences of their actions," observed Saldana. "They all had flaws, and whether they were victims of circumstances or because of the choices they made, they were very real because of their imperfections."

The movie's cast is a refreshing combination of Hollywood veterans and local Caymanians who were recruited, auditioned, and trained for several supporting roles in the film.

This resulted in a delicious infusion of local Cayman culture into over 30 speaking roles.

The role of Shy provided Orlando the opportunity to show new freedom and depth in his craft, perhaps to a degree never before seen. Certainly, being liberated from the restrictions of working with a sword helped. He does have two other contemporary films under his belt; The Calcium Kid, shot before Haven, and Elizabethtown, shot after Haven.

While both films were delightful, I still think he brings

more passion and spirit to this film. We see a wider range of emotions, from tender love and hope, to humiliation and shame, emotional withdrawal, rage, confusion, and despair, to name only a few.

The film is gripping, edgy, hip, tragic, complex, beautifully scripted, and wonderfully acted. The non-linear time shifts that Flowers employs may be perplexing to some. However, it served only to keep my eyes riveted to the screen. It's the kind of movie that requires your full attention. You'll want to put down your bucket of popcorn so you don't miss anything.

FYI

Haven, directed and written by Caymanian Frank E. Flowers, was shot in Cayman during 2003 and cost in the region of US\$6 million to make. The film tells the story of shady US businessman (Bill Paxton) who flees to Cayman to avoid federal prosecution. At the same time a Romeo-and-Juliet style love affair is chronicled by Orlando Bloom and Zoë Saldana. Haven is planned for limited release from Friday, 15 September and will initially be shown in eight cities across the US, before expanding to 40 cities by the end of the theatrical run. A Cable and Wireless sponsored screening in Cayman (by invite only) will take place on Saturday, 16 September.