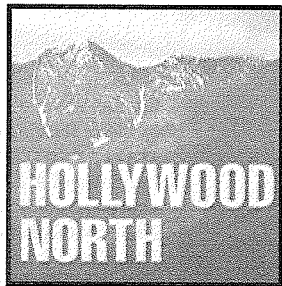


# DiCaprio helped by Canadian documentary

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■ **ROLE RESEARCH** Award-winning film about mercenaries in modern warfare shown to actor for his role in *Blood Diamond*



BY YVONNE ZACHARIAS  
VANCOUVER SUN

**L**eonardo DiCaprio got a little from his friends in Canada in the making of *Blood Diamond*. Who knew?

A locally made documentary called *Shadow Company* tackles the controversial subject of mercenaries in modern warfare. Neither obviously left nor right, it was co-directed by **Nick Bicanic** and **Jason Bourque**.

Bicanic got the idea to do the film after a classmate from Cambridge, England — a law graduate, no less — announced he was going overseas to become a mercenary. What followed were colourful and detailed e-mails to Bicanic from his friend on the ground in Iraq.

Bicanic sent an early cut of the film to **Edward Zwick**, director of *Blood Diamond*. Zwick replied in an e-mail from Mozambique, saying how much he loved the film and wanted to show it to DiCaprio for research on his character, an ex mercenary.

A few months later, Bicanic travelled to meet DiCaprio on set in Mozambique. He and actress Dominika Wolski spent two days there and wound up at a birthday party for Djimon Hounsou, who plays fisherman Solomon Vandy in *Blood Diamond*.

Bicanic and Bourque were also invited by **Senator Edward Kennedy** to a rare bi-partisan showing of *Shadow Company* on Capital Hill.

The little documentary that could has just received some much-deserved recognition. It netted **four Leos** at the weekend's ceremony in the documentary category, includ-



Ben Kingsley



Penelope Cruz

ing **best film, best film editing, best directing and best writing**. Kudos to *Shadow Company*.

Guess who was spotted outside Al's Pizza in Gastown recently? **Penelope Cruz** and **Sir Ben Kingsley**, who are in town shooting *Elegy*, which is based on the Philip Roth novel.

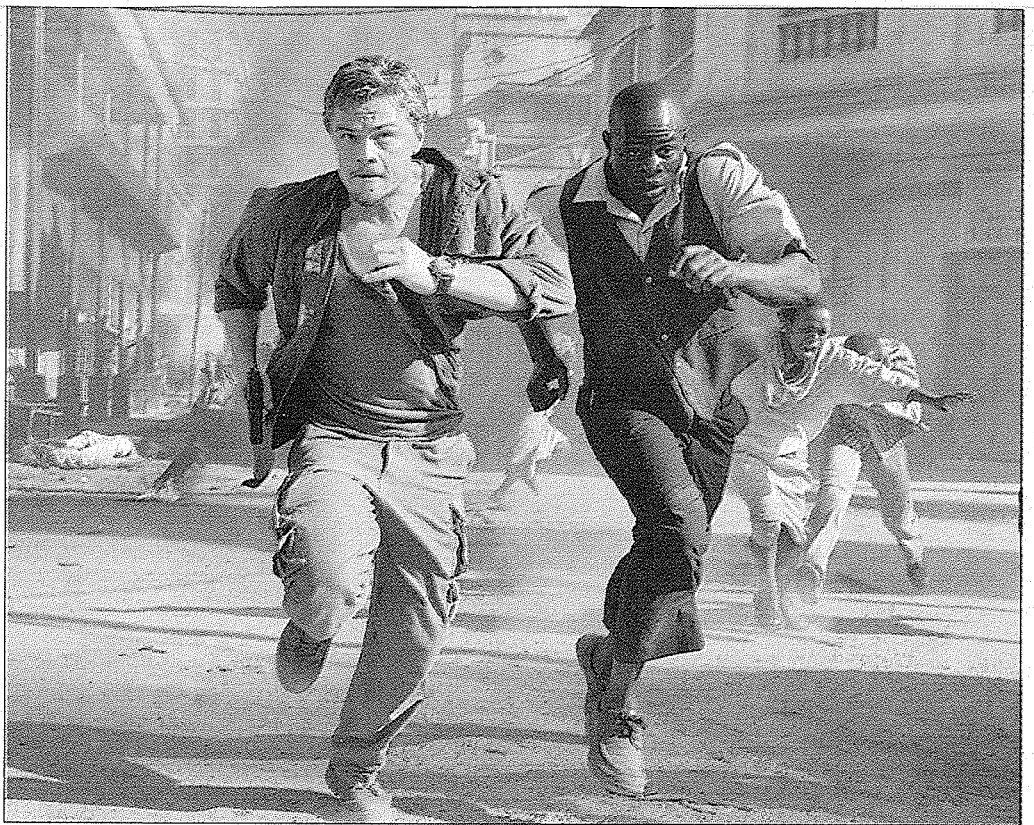
It is the story of cultural critic David Kepesh (Kingsley) who finds his life thrown into tragic disarray by Consuela Castello (Cruz), a well-manned student who awakens a sense of sexual possessiveness in her teacher.

Tuesday night, the filmmakers were putting up a New York City-style sign reading 77th Street on St. Paul's Hospital Comox Street entrance for a shooting there. New York City in the West End? Anything is possible.

The lovely and talented **Marcia Cross**, who plays Bree Van De Kamp in the monster hit *Desperate Housewives*, was among an array of celebrities who showed up Tuesday night for a splashy party celebrating the opening of Holt Renfrew's new store in downtown Vancouver. Also in attendance was **Dave Navarro** of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, who hosted TV show *Rock Star*.

The sci-fi television series *Battlestar Galactica*, which has been shot here, will be sailing out of our orbit. The American makers of the space opera with gritty realism have decided that season four, currently in production in Vancouver, will be the last.

"This show was always meant to



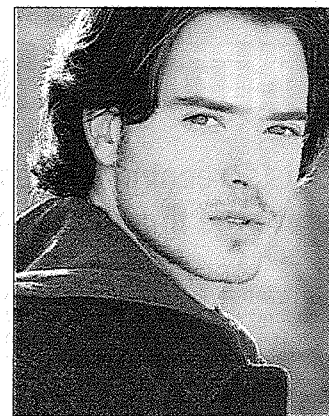
Leonardo DiCaprio and Djimon Hounsou run for their lives in the action-filled drama *Blood Diamond*. DiCaprio is cast as a former mercenary while Hounsou plays a fisherman.



Singer Patti LaBelle (left) and actress Marcia Cross share a joke at the grand opening of the new Holt Renfrew store in Vancouver.

have a beginning, a middle and finally, an end. Over the course of the past year, the story and the characters have been moving strongly toward that end and we've decided to listen to those internal voices and conclude the show on our own terms," said executive producers Ronald D. Moore and David Eick.

Location manager Ken Sponagle



Ryan Kennedy starred in the *Whistler* series shot by CTV.

reamed off a long list of shooting locations in and around Vancouver: the waterfall building near Granville Island, SFU, UBC, the Orpheum, the old Woodward's building, the Rogers Sugar factory, up in the woods in North Vancouver, a house in Lion's Bay in the first season, out to Kamloops last summer. And on and on and on.

"It has been a great, great experience," said Sponagle.

Insight Film Studios is set to start shooting two new movies of the week. In the first, called *Empty Arms*, Laura Leighton Savant plays a classical music critic who becomes pregnant after an uncharacteristic

one-night stand with a country music star, played by Antonio Cupo.

Her quest to find the perfect family to adopt their baby turns into a journey of self-discovery and love for both of them. It is expected to air this fall on Global in Canada and on Lifetime in the U.S.

In the second, *Ratko*, Ratko Volvic (Efen Ramirez) is the privileged son of a wealthy Eastern European dictator who enrolls for the freshman semester at an American university where his exotic accent and hedonistic ways soon establish him as the most colourful character on campus. But when he falls hard for a student activist, played by Katrina Bowden, he begins to question his father's true character and the course of his family's apparently inexhaustible wealth. It is expected air on the Sci-Fi Channel this fall.

Local talent agent Lesa Kirk says she has a hot one on her hands these days. **Ryan Kennedy** has just wrapped up a series lead on the soap operish series *Whistler*, which was mostly shot in the resort town.

He plays a lead role in the Spy-glass/Disney feature film *The Invisible*, now in theatres. He has had a number of other lead roles recently and has been offered the starring role in a feature film called *Chasing The White Dragon* which will be shot in Tupelo, Miss.

That, you will recall, is the birthplace of Elvis.

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