



20 Year Movie Drought Ends With “Crimson Tide”

By Mark Shaffer, Editor at Large

Welcome Back to Alabama

On November 9th something will happen in Beaufort that hasn't happened in 20 years. When Director VW Scheich calls, “Action!” it will mark the first time a feature film has rolled in Beaufort since William Freidkin shot the mega-budget war drama *Rules of Engagement* here in 1999.

The movie business has changed a lot in those two decades, mostly without South Carolina's participation. Our impressive run of hosting big budget blockbusters like *Forrest Gump* and *The Prince of Tides*

came to an abrupt end as politics gutted the state's production incentives and sent hundreds of millions of dollars in business elsewhere. Not to be outdone, a few years later North Carolina followed suit, in spite of huge protests across the state by thousands of film professionals.

Cha ching,

Georgia wins the Hollywood Lottery. And it was a hell of a payout. According to the MPAA's

2018 figures, the Georgia film and TV industry generated about 92,000 jobs, payed \$4.6 billion in wages and produced an overall economic impact of \$9.5 billion. That's about a third of SC's total budget for the coming year. So,
yeah

Meanwhile back in *Big Chill* Ville, Ron and Rebecca Tucker created the Beaufort Film Society and took control of the Beaufort International Film Festival as a means to bring the movies back. It's been a long, hard struggle, but as Ron says, "You've got to start somewhere and it might as well be Beaufort." The struggle will finally pay off to a degree this November when cameras roll on the low budget independent romantic comedy, *Stars Fell on Alabama*

Beaufort's doubled for 'Bama before as Forrest Gump's fictional home of Greenbow. The film comes to Beaufort via Los Angeles-based filmmakers, VW Scheich and Uyen Le. And just like in the movies, there's a backstory.



Flashback to February, 2012. I first met the couple at the film festival. They won best short that year and kept coming back and winning, eventually taking Audience Choice for their first feature, *Interwoven*. Connections were made and bonds were forged. And then they did something strange. They pulled up stakes in L.A. and spent the next two years living in Beaufort trying to raise the cash to make *Basement Bob*, a comedy written by BIFF regular Gary Weeks.

"VW and I wanted nothing more than to film *Basement Bob* in Beaufort," says Uyen. "But try as

we might, we couldn't quite make the financing piece fit. It took moving back to L.A. to find the funds for an independent feature film.”

Even so, because of the tight budget and lack of incentives, some of *Stars Fell* will be shot in L.A. before decamping to Beaufort. The project also brings back *Interwoven* Cinematographer Wey Wang.

“Apart from the lack of incentives,” says Wang, “the real reason this movie’s being made in Beaufort is because of the time Uyen and VW spent there. If they hadn’t done that, they wouldn’t have all these contacts. All the great things that the town is able to bring to this project also make it possible.”

“The biggest concern with any production is time,” says Uyen. “It’s always easier to get things done when you’re on the ground, which we can’t be since the first week of shooting is happening in L.A. But we’ve assembled – like The Avengers – and have a group of wildly creative, talented, resourceful, and hard-working people to help in Beaufort while we’re in L.A. We’re confident that we’ll be in a good place once we arrive in Beaufort.”

The Big Hiatus

The official synopsis for *Stars Fell on Alabama* is as follows:



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