



Crewmembers from "Roadkill: A Love Story" film a scene in Ortonville recently. *Photo by Bob Flath.*

Local stars in "Roadkill: A Love Story"

By Susan Bromley
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Brandon Twp.- Filming a movie isn't always glamorous.

On a warm, rainy Tuesday earlier this month, Director Raphael Buechel stands under an umbrella held by an assistant and adjusts a camera. A few other crewmembers of the movie, "Roadkill: A Love Story" huddle nearby on the edge of Oakhill Road near Leece Road.

Sitting inside a 2005 Crown Victoria is Kris Kopacki, a Highland resident. He will drive the car for a short distance down Oakhill Road as Buechel films a

scene. Kopacki is not an actor, but owns multiple cars, including this ex-police car, which will appear in the movie as a law enforcement vehicle from the fictional Blood Springs Police Department.

"I've been doing my best to break into the movie industry," says Kopacki. "I'm driving the vehicle in scenes when you can't see who's behind the wheel. There are no stunts. It's a lot of waiting. A lot of boredom."

Brandon Culp, a 2005 Brandon High School graduate, is standing beneath a tree on Leece Road, watching as Buechel instructs Kopacki to drive down Oakhill.



Raphael Buechel (behind camera) films a scene in Ortonville for the movie, "Roadkill: A Love Story." *Photo by Bob Flath.*

Movie, from page 15

Culp, 25, says he has always wanted to be an actor. He attended the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City for two years after graduating from BHS.

"Acting fills me with joy," he said. "What else would I do with my life?"

It is difficult to make a living as an actor he admits; in fact, he calls it "borderline impossible." He performed for three years in a children's theater tour, playing parts in "Pinocchio," "Aladdin," and "Hansel and Gretel." He also did an off-Broadway show "Saddam: The Musical," at the Arthur Seelen Theater at 40th and Broadway in New York. But he has also spent time working at Starbucks. His girlfriend, an aspiring actress, works for a temp agency.

In 2007, Culp learned that Raphael and Kelly Buechel wanted to make a short film. Culp is friends with the Buechels, who own Leahpar Productions. They wanted to make it a feature length film, but didn't

have a script. Culp offered to write the script and play the male lead. In October 2007, after five months of writing, he gave them the script for "Roadkill: A Love Story." The movie is about Mitch, a mute car wash employee played by Culp, who falls in love with Taryn, a female serial killer who drives a big white pickup truck and has used it in the past to run over people.

"My character is very sad," said Culp. "It's very difficult playing the role because he keeps everything bottled inside. It's emotionally exhausting, but at the same time, incredibly fun and rewarding. I consider shooting this movie one of the most positive experiences of my life."

Filming should wrap soon. Buechel is planning to distribute the movie in Europe next March, but Culp hopes good things will happen to Ortonville and Michigan as a result of the movie being shot here.

"It's the main reason I'm doing it," said Culp. "I hope people like it because we're trying to make the best possible movie."