

From Airborne to filmmaking — McDowell makes debut as director

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE CO-FOUNDER of the company that launched the successful but controversial supplement Airborne, Rider McDowell will debut his latest creation Saturday, Oct. 15 — a gritty full-length feature film — at the third annual Carmel Art and Film Festival.

McDowell is the writer and director of "The Mercy Man," which is based on a novel with the same title he wrote in 1987. Set in New York City, the movie follows the adventures of an undercover police officer, Willy Diaz, who is played by actor J.C. Hernandez. In the movie, Diaz and a beautiful investigative reporter, Esme Pinyero, try to solve the murder of a mutual friend. Their efforts lead to the discovery that the crime was the work of a serial killer.

Guenia Lemos portrays Pinyero, while Andre Royo plays a key supporting role. Hernandez and Lemos have appeared in the television series, "Law and Order," while Royo played "Bubbles" in the television series, "The Wire."

"The Mercy Man" was filmed last year in New York City, on a farm in New Jersey and at the former Carmel Hospital site.

"It's a gritty film with a gritty look," McDowell told The Pine Cone this week.

As a filmmaker, McDowell turns to the genre of 1970s police thrillers for inspiration. "My favorite films come from the 1970s," McDowell observed. His "best of" list includes "Taxi Driver," "The French Connection" and "Dirty Harry."

McDowell said the budget for making "The Mercy Man" was "less than \$4 million." In addition to the expense of being a filmmaker, he discovered it's hard work as well. "It's exciting and invigorating, but it's very taxing," he observed. "You're out in the elements all the time."

While he's had several offers to distribute the film, McDowell said he is in no rush sign a deal. "I'm gun shy, so I'm taking my time," he added.

"The Mercy Man" will be screened at 6 p.m. at Sunset Center. Tickets are \$10. It's one of 41 feature-length movies and 50 shorts that will be shown during the Carmel Art and

Film festival, which runs from Oct. 13 - 16. Sunset Center is located at San Carlos and Ninth. For

more information about the festival, call (831) 625-3700 or visit www.carmelartandfilm.com.

CONDOS

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any concerns. "The impacts have been thoroughly vetted," Kane said.

But about two dozen members of the public spoke out against the condo project at Tuesday's hearing, including Carmel's building and services manager Sean Conroy

"Good planning is forward-looking and not reactionary," Conroy suggested. He said zoning changes should be a part of an overall plan to benefit the public and not "a reaction to an applicant's proposal."

Conroy's presence was noted by supervisor Lou Calcagno, who said he was contacted by a Carmel city official as well. "I got an email from the city asking me to deny the project," Calcagno said.

Defending his vote against the plan, Calcagno said there was overwhelming public opposition to it. "I've never received so many emails opposing a project," he noted.

If the supervisors had approved the condos, Calcagno suggested they would just end up in court. "It would open a Pandora's Box of legal issues," he added.

Opponents of the condo plan were elated by the supervisors' vote.

The next day, Mark Bayne who lives in the neighborhood where the condos would have been built, said he was "very pleased with the outcome," and that he "slept better last night than I've slept in a long time."

He also praised local attorney Molly Erickson, "who we are deeply indebted to — literally and figuratively."

Bayne wouldn't say how much opponents owe Erickson for helping them stop the condo development, but he said they're talking about staging a fundraising "block party" to

help pay the bill. "We couldn't have navigated this morass of bureaucracy without her," he added.

Located at 24945 Valley Way on 3.68 acres, the Villas de Carmelo project included 37 market-rate units and nine "affordable" units.

Widewaters pushed the plan as a "rare and unique" opportunity to restore the property's 80-year-old building, which was Community Hospital before it moved to Highway 68 in 1962, and then became a convalescent hospital before closing in 2005. Kane called the building a "prime example of Monterey-Spanish architecture."

Health fair in Seaside sponsored by CHOMP

COMPLIMENTARY SCREENINGS and the latest information on a range of health topics will be offered at a free health fair on Saturday, Oct. 22 in Seaside.

The fair, sponsored by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and the city of Seaside, is open to adults 18 and older. Staff members from the hospital will do blood pressure checks and provide free screenings for cholesterol, diabetes, and carbon monoxide.

Attendees will find the latest information on topics including healthy eating, exercise and lifestyle, sleep issues, osteoporosis, cancer prevention, recognizing the signs of heart attack and stroke, hospice support services, infant and child safety and Medicare.

The Oct. 22 fair is from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Oldemeyer Center, 986 Hilby Avenue, Seaside. For more information, call (831) 625-4646.

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