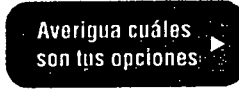


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'Trouble with Cali' producer: 'No one wants the film done more than we do'

BY DAVID SINGLETON (STAFF WRITER)

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Producer Michael Sorvino understands Lackawanna County officials are rightly concerned about their \$500,000, taxpayer-funded investment in his father's long-delayed film, "The Trouble with Cali."

What he thinks gets drowned out in the hubbub over the project's status is the personal and professional stake his father, actor Paul Sorvino, and other members of his family have in making the film as good as it can be, artistically and financially.

"No one wants this film done more than we do," Mr. Sorvino said. "We have a lot riding on this."

Mr. Sorvino contacted The Times-Tribune after reading a story in Tuesday's editions about "The Trouble with Cali" and his father's prediction that it would be completed "in the next month or so."

Calling from California, where he is working on the film, Mr. Sorvino expressed dismay at the "little snubs and innuendo" that he said creep into media reports about the \$1.3 million project and seem to suggest there is no interest in completing it.

He pointed out "The Trouble with Cali" has been a family project in one form or another for 15 years. His sister Amanda wrote the script. In addition to their roles as producer and director, respectively, he and his father act in the film. Another sister, Mira, is also part of the cast.

"We are working our damndest to get this thing finished, and finished in the best possible way," he said.

In a move spearheaded by former majority Commissioner Robert C. Cordaro, the county invested \$250,000 in the movie in 2005 and anted up another \$250,000 in 2006.

Filming started in and around Scranton in late 2006 and continued into 2007, an extended time frame that Mr. Sorvino said is rarely noted in reports about the movie's delay.

Asked where the picture stood on several different occasions in 2008, Paul Sorvino almost always replied that it was in post-production and would be completed in a matter of months.

Michael Sorvino said his father "just felt pressure to give the media a timeline" when questioned about the film even as he was trying to line up the additional financing he needed to finish it.

"Occasionally, this does happen with films," he said. "You realize there is more to do than you have money to do."

Mr. Sorvino did not want to commit to a completion date but said the "month or so" mentioned by his father is probably "not a far-off estimate."

"It will be done when it is finished, whether it's one month or two months or three," he said. "Is it getting to the finish line? Absolutely."

Once the movie is completed, he said, it will be shopped around for a distribution deal, which will determine when and how the film is released.

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Mr. Sorvino said he was and remains "very appreciative" of the county's investment in the project, but is troubled by the perception "that we just took the money and spent it on I don't know what." In reality, he said, \$500,000 or more was spent locally during the filming.

While he recognizes political considerations may have come into play with new majority commissioners taking office in 2008, he also thinks there was a misunderstanding by county officials of what it would take to complete the film.

He hopes that will resolve itself as the film eases toward its finished form.

"Let's move on and work together to make this a success for everybody," Mr. Sorvino said. "I believe absolutely there can be a happy ending here."

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Finish the film or return the money. Period.

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And yet, Michael Bay can film live action scenes, add digital special effects, go through the "post-production" phase and release a "Transformers" blockbuster movie within a year and a half. I doubt this movie is as complex as that. So either there are serious flaws with the filming of this production that is costing all this time in "post-production" or this movie should never have been made in the first place. Personally, I believe it's just not a good movie and the Sorvino family doesn't want to release for fear it is going to bomb and they will run out of excuses as to how Lackawanna County's money is going to be repaid.

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