

Fine Arts Center's Rogers produces first feature film

- + Name: **Eric Rogers**
- + School: Fine Arts Center
- + Years teaching: 12
- + Education: B.S. from Bob Jones University in film production
- + Hometown: Roanoke, Va.; moved to Greenville in 1986
- + Family: Wife is Jo Carol; sons (from a previous marriage) are Lance, 11, and Ethan, 8.
- + Achievements/awards: 2004 District Web Site of the Year; created a podcast featuring FAC performing arts students (can be accessed from the FAC homepage: www.fineartscenter.net; recently featured in an issue of "Script Magazine," a national screenwriting magazine.

There are few people without some small connection to the film industry. Granted, most of us are on the receiving end of that connection, meaning we sit riveted in front of our televisions, bowl of popcorn in one hand, DVD remote in the other.

Eric Rogers, however, sits on a different side of the screen. He belongs to the much smaller group of people who produce the images that appear magically before us at the click of a button.

Rogers, film/video instructor at the Fine Arts Center, is nearing the completion of his first feature film, "Elizabeth Gunness." The fictional film, "sort of a thriller with dark comedic moments," is about an older woman who lives in a small town and is the pillar of her community, but for her dark secrets. The movie centers on how the woman influences a little girl who comes to live with her, says **Rogers**.

Working with a very modest budget (about \$50,000 made up of donations from 25 private "investors"), **Rogers** knew he had to draw on the resources he had at his disposal. He wrote the script with his lead actress already in mind. His wife's friend, "a great actress," according to **Rogers**, accepted the role, before she even knew what it would be.

It took him all of 2003 to write the script, **Rogers** says. The following summer, **Rogers** contacted some of his former students to fill additional roles and help with the filming process. It took 4 1/2 weeks to shoot the film. His own old house became the main set, **Rogers** says, and his wife, Jo Carol, painter and Anderson College professor, assumed the roles of co-producer and production designer, and was in charge of costumes, props and set design.

In a few weeks New York composer Andrew Ingkavet will complete the final musical score and, after a final sound mix, the film will be finished. But, for **Rogers**, the production process is far from over. The film must now be distributed. "The main thing is making the money back for our investors," says **Rogers**.

It was with this advance goal in mind that **Rogers** attended the weeklong IFP (Independent Feature Project) Conference in Soho, N.Y., in September. There he met his composer and "took away a better understanding of how to contact distributors and enter (film) festivals," **Rogers** says.

He hopes the film will gain theatrical release in a few cities and then sell on DVD. **Rogers** plans to keep producing films. His bigger dream, however, is to open his own film school/production company. The

school would serve a dual purpose: independent filmmakers could come in and use the students as a cheap crew, and the students would gain hands-on experience. This film, featuring the free labor of a number of his former students, was a testing ground for the idea, **Rogers** says.

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TEACHER OF THE WEEK
