

# press release

For more information and screening copies, please contact:

Joshua P. Dilworth  
Eighty-Watt Cinema  
Phone: 212.712.2509  
Fax: 917-441-4354  
press@eighty-watt.com

*for immediate release*

## Easton Residents Host Film Shoot

*Tom and Nancy Walters graciously opened their home for the filming of *The Surprise* – the professional debut by family friends and NYC filmmakers Joshua Dilworth and Nicholas White. Both parties were pleasantly...surprised.*

(Easton, Pennsylvania) April 1, 2004 – Producer Joshua Dilworth and director Nicholas White of Eighty-Watt Cinema had searched far and wide for the ideal location for their 35mm short film, *The Surprise*. Longtime Easton residents Tom and Nancy Walters gladly came to the rescue.

Discouraged after scouring all five boroughs of New York City, Joshua and Nicholas were at a loss. That is, until their good friend and frequent collaborator Nelson Walters suggested he give his parents in Easton a call. Later that day the threesome, accompanied by key crew members, descended on Easton to scout out the possibilities.

“Our son Nelson called us to see if we had any interest, and naturally we were supportive of their efforts,” recounts Nancy Walters. “We learned a lot about what it takes to create even a short piece of film. It’s unbelievable, really, unless you see it for yourself.” The Walters’ home was eventually chosen as the primary location for *The Surprise*; filming of the just-completed film took place over three 16-hour days last year.

Joshua Dilworth, Nicholas White, and Nelson Walters met at Haverford College, and toured the East Coast as members of the *Lighted Fools*, an improv and sketch comedy troupe. Nelson, a New York comedian and a graduate of Easton High, makes a brief appearance in *The Surprise*. Nelson is also an associate producer at VH1, and is directing and producing a behind-the-scenes documentary about the making of the film.

For Joshua (producer) and Nicholas (director), *The Surprise* marks their third film together and their first commercial endeavor. But the collaboration is the continuation of an ongoing creative relationship that began nearly six years ago. Their film production company, Eighty-Watt Cinema, grew out of a student theater organization that Joshua and Nicholas founded under the Eighty-Watt moniker at Haverford. Their first effort was a remarkably successful production of Oscar Wilde’s *Salome* in a converted black-box theater.

As Nicholas recalls, “At that point, there wasn’t anyone to help us – in fact, there wasn’t even a stage. We built everything from the ground up. In retrospect, it was great training for the real world.” Encouraged by their professors and peers, Joshua and Nicholas continued producing and directing plays for the duration of their college careers. But as their productions began to integrate more and more film and video into the performances, and “the transition to filmmaking seemed natural”, says Dilworth.

And here they were again, building from the ground up.

Joshua and Nicholas had visited the Walters at their home on several previous occasions, but were unaware of how accessible and film-friendly Lehigh Valley is. With a quick call to the Pennsylvania Film Office, the pair were up and running. The Office is designed to encourage filmmaking in Pennsylvania, and offers help with everything from permits to locations to tax breaks and other incentives.

They were also put in touch with local casting director Toni Cusumano, who read the script and loved it. “Sometimes you do a project for the money, and sometimes you take one on because the story is so powerful. *The Surprise* was definitely the latter,” she remembers. In fact, Toni Cusumano Casting used all local extras for *The Surprise*.

“Everyone bent over backwards for us, including the extras, who were incredibly patient and just excited to be on a movie set,” says producer Dilworth. “Production involves a lot hurrying up and a lot of waiting – experienced extras who have seen the best and worst of filmmaking are an invaluable asset.”

In alerting the Walters’ neighbors and local police about the production and the 15-vehicle entourage that accompanied it, the filmmakers met a plethora of curious onlookers. “It was amazing how interested and supportive the town community was,” Dilworth remarks. “For instance, I had a 45 minute conversation about other films shot in Easton with Bob, a local locksmith who arrived on set to rescue the art department. It seems their keys had somehow managed to lock themselves inside the prop truck.”

“The Walters’ home, it turns out, was just what we were looking for – and it had been right under our noses the whole time,” says Dilworth. The house is located on 2 and 1/2 acres of property in Forks Township, in the area known as Paxinoso Ridge. Originally built in 1947, the Walters’ home has benefited from numerous additions and renovations, resulting in a charming architectural style and a distinctive hometown feel.

“The house was the location we put the most thought and effort into,” adds White, “This is a movie about the people who live next door. And it is the space that Katie and Jack, as a couple, occupy; they define it, and it defines them.”

The story centers around Katie Miller, who is sent into a tailspin on her thirtieth birthday, mostly on account of a newly discovered pregnancy and an increasingly troubled marriage. Ultimately she is left to resolve her struggles alone, at a time in her life when assurances should outnumber surprises. “It’s about being in a situation where knowing what’s right and wrong and what you want and don’t want is impossible,” says director White, “I truly believe it is one of the hardest situations any person can ever have to face. . .but it is also about things we grapple with every day.”

These days, Nancy and Tom Walters remember the shoot fondly: “We loved providing the opportunity for artistic creation,” says Mrs. Walters. She has not forgotten, however, how overwhelming the production was: “Each night Tom and I went to bed with cameras on track staring at us and black curtains on the windows, with spotlights aimed in our windows. We halfway expected that all of a sudden someone would shout ‘ACTION!’ and we’d be in the movie ourselves!”

“The Walters were absolutely wonderful hosts,” Dilworth says, “and the film wouldn’t have been at all possible without their help.” He and Nicholas hope to continue shooting in Pennsylvania for years to come and are currently scouting locations in Bucks County for an upcoming feature project.

*The Surprise* (2004, 35mm short) was officially completed in March. It is currently touring the country on the festival circuit and is seeking educational distribution. For screening information, log onto <http://www.eighty-watt.com>.

Eighty-Watt Cinema, LLC was founded in 2002 by Joshua Dilworth and Nicholas White, longtime collaborators and recent graduates of Haverford College. Located in New York City, Eighty-Watt Cinema produces narrative shorts, features, and educational films.

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