

'We have found a technology where the complete digital cinema solution is provided at \$5 per show'

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UNITED KINGDOM

Seaside heights

Medb Films' Elaine Wickham and Jan Dunn escaped London to make features and build a post-production business in Ramsgate. **WENDY MITCHELL** reports



While some in the British film business sit in their Soho offices complaining about funding, Medb Films founders **Jan Dunn** and **Elaine Wickham** are quietly building an indie film-making mini-empire in Ramsgate, on the Kent Coast.

The seaside town is not known for its film scene, but that is changing since Dunn and Wickham shot 2005's award-winning low-budget debut feature *Gypo* in the area (Wolfe released the film in the US and Lionsgate in the UK). They have now completed a second feature in the area, the \$2m (£1m) *Ruby Blue*, starring **Bob Hoskins** and **Josiane Balasko** in the story of a British widower who falls for his foreign neighbour.

Dunn and Wickham met several years ago through a Screen South programme and realised they had similar goals. "Both of us are 'go for it' types. We really do have a conversation about something and then get on with it," Dunn

as writer/director while Wickham concentrates on producing, although they recently swapped roles for Wickham to direct her first short, *My Mother*. They plan to continue working as a pair (even as their films get bigger), and are repped by London's Lou Coulson and LA's William Morris.

'We don't want to take three to four years to raise financing. We want to make films'

Jan Dunn, Medb Films

The Medb team has expanded to include head of sound **Neil Collymore**, line producer/co-producer **Frances Patterson**, head of post-production **Emma Collins**, assistant producer **Ricci Lee Berry**, sound assistant **Alex Glynn**, and PA and assistant editor **Kelvin Brown**.

Growing their team away from

Bob Hoskins in Medb Films' *Ruby Blue*



London has its advantages. "Isolation is a good thing, it keeps you focused," says Wickham.

Even more importantly, the pair along with business partner **James Thomas**, the proprietor of the Royal Harbour Hotel, have had the space in Ramsgate to set up post facilities and a screening room for use on their own projects and to attract new clients.

"We don't make much money from the post facilities, but it supports independent film-makers like us," Dunn says of the new facilities, which include a high-tech screening room and mixing studio, two edit suites and a track-laying suite.

The homey boutique hotel is more than a base of operations — the companies share business contacts and Medb's cast members or clients have a convenient place to stay during shoots or post-production work. And, as their Ramsgate reach grows, they are also in talks to turn an abandoned museum space into a soundstage.

They will move to another seaside town in May when Target Entertainment screens *Ruby Blue* in the Cannes Market, as the first feature that TV veteran/Target CEO **Alison Rayson** has executive produced. Also backing the project are London's Old Vic chief executive **Sally Greene** and **Charles Finch** of *Pink Sands*.

Casting is important to Dunn, who spent years acting in classical theatre. That is how she attracts actors such as **Paul McGann**, **Pauline McLynn**, **Hoskins**, or potentially Kent local **Brenda Blethyn** to work on Medb's projects. "I speak their language," Dunn says. "Also, actors are very intelligent and love being engaged by a script."

Next up for the Medb crew is finishing **Kevin Markwick**'s short *Lullaby* and planning a summer shoot of Dunn's next project, *The Calling*. That story follows a girl who is drawn to become a Benedictine nun, and several high-profile British actresses have already committed to the project.

UNITED KINGDOM

GUARDIAN A

Self-described "film futurist" Matt Hanson has found a new way to fund, create and promote his next project with the help of 50,000 friends. By **EL**

In May 2006, UK screenwriter **Matt Hanson** soft-launched his *A Swarm Of Angels* project, the first step in creating a \$2m (£1m) feature film that will be conceived, developed, funded, produced and ultimately distributed via the internet.

The project is touted as the first truly "open-source" feature film — involving movie fans rather than the studio system in funding and producing a full-length feature. It will then be distributed free online to a million targeted users.

As author of the book *The End Of Celluloid: Film Futures In The Digital Age* and founder of the onedotzero digital short-film festival, Hanson has long believed the film industry needs to evolve if it is to survive.

"Making a debut feature film in a traditional way felt like a missed opportunity," explains Hanson. "Rather than banging on all the usual doors, I thought, 'Here's an opportunity to put the ideas from my book into practice.'"

The *A Swarm Of Angels* project has 50,000 web-based subscribers involved in every aspect of the production. A \$50 (£25) fee entitles each subscriber to have input on everything from the colour of the website logo to how profits will be spent.



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