



## IDEAS BORN OUT OF ISOLATION

### Camerin Kelly Burns on *Calm at the Edge of the Sea*

BY EMILIE CLARK

Has anyone else noticed that movies pretty much suck lately? What with all the remakes and sequels, it's hard to pick through and find anything actually worth watching. It seems Hollywood has run out of ideas. Thankfully, there are some folks from Butte County with new ideas and a great film. *Calm at the Edge of the Sea* is a feature-length film directed by Camerin Kelly Burns and produced by The Company of Owls. It was recently selected for the Mendocino Film Festival. The film is described on the festival's Web site as: "A brilliantly performed feature shot locally in Fort Bragg and around the coast, this film follows the course of a young man who leaves a troubled life in Los Angeles to live with an uncle and family he hasn't seen in years. What at first appears to be a calm and tranquil life by the sea gradually reveals its underside, in carefully crafted scenes that seem unwritten yet subtly underscore the complexities of life." *Synthesis* recently spoke with Burns about his childhood in Magalia, what it's like to make a film and his hopes for the future.

#### So you grew up in Butte County?

Yeah, about half the crew on *Calm at the Edge of the Sea* is from Chico and Paradise. Casey [Barclay, assistant producer] and I both grew up in Magalia. We were both home-schooled, so we had plenty of free time as kids to run around in the woods and create different worlds. For me, isolation as a child was a key to later artistic expression. The characters in *Calm*, and the film itself, exist in a somewhat separate dimension similar to the world of my childhood.

#### How did you get into film?

I think my interest in film had a lot to do with isolation again. Being a half-hour from most of our friends, Casey and I had limitless time to study films growing up. I am interested in creating a microcosm of the universe, and examining human relationships and emotions at their purest form.

#### Where did the ideas for *Calm* come from?

The great process of life, or something like that. *Calm's* characters are a crafted accumulation of everyone who has made us laugh, cry, beg, vicious, tired and melancholy over the past few years. Everyone sees the film in a different light, but there are fragments of our friends' make-up throughout the movie. At the same time, *Calm* really has nothing to do with anything I personally know. It is beyond myself, my friends, my disappointments and achievements.

#### What was your favorite part of making the film?

The collaboration of different ideas, emotions, expression and everything in between. Filmmaking would be depressing without the right collaboration. I couldn't even imagine the terror of studio-financed film. We worked together as a family. Without the family

approach to making a film, the process would be a nightmare. Of course, as a family, we still fight and scream and hate each other half the time. But a family forgives; I don't think that a studio would. Also, while shooting we had 25 young men and women holed up in an old bungalow house on the side of the ocean. For 29 days we all lived, ate, breathed, crushed, kissed, battled and loved each other. There really isn't anything better than that.

**I noticed your mom produced the film. Are your parents involved in all of your projects?**

My parents have always been the core for our larger projects. They have supported me every step of the way, and understand that our dreams in these films are much greater than personal gain. Filming in Fort Bragg, we created a community. My parents were the foundation for that community. Everything would have been impossible without them. My mother Karin was our producer, but she also was the first one up and the last one to go to sleep every night. Coordinating everything from what lead actor Gary Kohn's picky snack menu was to be, to making eye appointments for Brian, my co-director, who left his contacts in LA. I love her for being my mother, but I love her even more for dealing with us jerks.

**Why did you choose Everlovely Lightingheart to do the score?**

I wanted something experimental, music that could go beyond what *Calm* was to become. Of course it had to complement the visual aspect of the film itself, but I didn't want it to match. In most films you see a mountain and you hear horns. In *Calm* you see a loathing man, or a dying lamb and you hear what sounds like 20 rusted grandfather clocks inside a deprivation tank chiming backwards in a dungeon knee-deep in blood. Everlovely is one of the most essential parts of the body, which is the *Calm*. I can't even imagine the film without them. They will be releasing the score through Hydrahead this coming winter/spring.

**Where do you plan on taking the film from here?**

There are many different routes. My main goal is to find a producer with some pull who is interested in the film — someone who can push us in the right direction. I don't think this film is going to make millions of dollars, or anything like that. The film is more of an experience than Hollywood entertainment.

**How did your film end up in the Mendocino Film Festival?**

I think the fact that we shot in Fort Bragg, which is the next town north of Mendocino, had a lot to do with it. I know a lot of really good people in Northern California, and the Mendocino Film Festival is the perfect place to kick off what is going to be the next year or so of festival-related chaos for *Calm*.

Catch the trailer for *Calm at the Edge of the Sea* at [www.owlcompany.com](http://www.owlcompany.com), or check out [www.mendocinofilmfestival.com](http://www.mendocinofilmfestival.com) for more on Camerin's film.