



## CineCoup Drives “Interstate 90” to A Theatre Near You

When Jason McFarling first told his friend Allan Wylie about the CineCoup Film Accelerator – designed to help indie filmmakers develop, market and finance their feature films – they decided it would be the perfect opportunity for them to work together on a project. They knew it would mean a lot of long nights and delicate balancing of family commitments, but the accountability of weekly missions and the idea of being on a team striving for a specific goal appealed to the former film school classmates.

CineCoup required a Power Trio, so the pair approached Mary MacDonald Rival, who had just won at the 2012 Moondance Film Festival for a project she had written with Allan and she had enjoyed working with Jason in the past. Her motivation in accepting their offer was the fun of teaming up with them again, the learning opportunities that awaited with each mission, and the once-in-a-lifetime adventure she’d experience from being in the first “season” of CineCoup.

The project chosen was “Interstate 90” because, with crafty filmmaking techniques, the high-octane road thriller could be made for the \$1 million in production financing prize CineCoup dangled in front of the initial 90 hungry film teams. Better yet, the guaranteed release in Cineplex theatres included in the top prize would mean unparalleled exposure for the team and their cast.

“Interstate 90” is a great vehicle to bring Jessie Pavelka, Sitara Hewitt and Frank Chiesurin on screen together. The world-wide fan support this has garnered for the project has been overwhelming and at the very least is fodder for a doctoral thesis on the impact of Social Media.

The social media frenzy all began when fans started trying to influence E.L. James, the author of *50 Shades of Grey*, that the star of “A Year to Save My Life” in the UK (Jessie Pavelka) would make the perfect Christian Grey. One fan page quickly grew to over 17,000 fans set on having him cast in the role. Numerous polls have been taken, articles written and fan art created to further their cause. But something even more phenomenal happened along the way...

At the same time, the short film, “The Charon Incident” (written and directed by Allan Wylie, starring Jessie Pavelka, and produced along with Mary) was in post-production. When existence of the short was announced on social media... the floodgates opened and this growing fan base began supporting a film they had never seen. Bit by bit, wonderful friendships began to develop within the group of fans, with road trips to see the short in film festivals and various girl weekends organized to meet up with fellow fans in both North America and the UK. How wild is that!

These amazingly creative fans then began supporting the filmmakers and their various projects by making fan art, encouraging others to learn about the projects, and taking to Twitter and Facebook to spread the word. So when “Interstate 90” was entered into CineCoup, they jumped feet first into promoting the project and most importantly, encouraging and inspiring the team to reach for the sky.

Knowing that there are people so heavily invested in their success keeps the team grounded and rooted to their goals. For example, when “Interstate 90” won the Critics Choice for the Speechless mission the response was intoxicating for the team.

In addition to the fan support, Allan, Jason and Mary are respectful of the fact that CineCoup has opened up new channels of influence for the industry. Regardless of the final outcome, being part of this pilot program makes the trio part of Canadian filmmaking history.

The overall experience was more valuable than a competition with winners and losers. The learning experience of completing a mission and then exploring what treatment different teams gave to it was fascinating and definitely enlightening. The team welcomed the opportunity to build their profile within the industry and to develop a solid pitch and marketing package.

Building a team isn't limited in their eyes to the “Interstate 90” film. The cooperation and comradery that has developed among so many of the filmmakers is inspiring and rewarding. After all, you never know down the road when a connection made through CineCoup will be the true prize!