



## You ought to be in pictures

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By Samaia Hernandez , Record-Journal staff

WALLINGFORD - It may have taken Alex Calvo years to figure out precisely what he wanted to do. Now that he knows, there's no turning back.

For 15 years, Calvo had a lucrative career as a computer software developer. In his mid-30s, he threw in the towel and decided to dedicate time to creating dark, yet romantic, fantasy and horror films.

After nearly five years as a full-time filmmaker and with two feature films under his belt, Calvo is starting to enjoy the fruits of his labor by gaining credibility in a highly competitive and often daunting field - and he's doing it all from his home in Wallingford.

"The technology, ironically, brought me into the field," Calvo said at his Wild Life Drive home, surrounded by several props from his most recent feature film, "The Melancholy Fantastic," shot almost exclusively in town.

With the advent of digital cameras capable of mimicking 35-millimeter film like that used in Hollywood features, and a Connecticut film tax credit in place, Calvo began writing and shooting short films and documentaries to learn the craft he first admired as a young child with a particular interest in horror films and ghost stories.

The next step was creating his first full-length feature - the 2007 film, "The Other Side of The Tracks," about a 20-something man at a crossroads a decade after the death of his high school girlfriend. The movie, with scenes shot in town, recently was picked up by Artist View Entertainment of Los Angeles and soon could wind up on television screens and DVDs nationally or internationally.

When Calvo sat down last year to write a dark holiday story about a teen who communicates with her dead mother, he had a better idea of what to do. Unlike "Tracks," this movie wouldn't be created with the idea of attracting a big-name actor or two, but for up-and-coming artists, many in his own backyard.

To maximize production values with a budget of less than \$1 million, Calvo wrote scenes with town locations in mind. Sala's Corner Store, the Wallingford Public Library, North Main Street and Cheshire Road all are featured in "Melancholy," which is in post-production.

For Calvo, who was born in Buenos Aires and immigrated to Connecticut at age 7, it has all been part of a learning process.

"From development, pre-production, production, post-production - and some consider distribution part of the process - it's all about overseeing the vision of the film," said Calvo, whose wife, Linda, and daughter, Bridget, work on his films.

Marty Lang, a local filmmaker who helped design curriculum for the state's Summer Film Industry Training Program, admires Calvo's dedication to the field. The film training program has locations at Quinnipiac University and Middlesex Community College.

"He's an inspiration to anybody here in Connecticut, just as somebody who's really chasing what he wants to do," said Lang, who has worked on Calvo's films.

Town resident Chris Capot agrees.

"The discipline that he had when he was actively being a computer programmer, a Microsoft programmer, is something he's been able to leverage as a film producer and director," said Capot, who handles publicity for Calvo's films.

Last year, the state extended the 30-percent tax credit for two years for production companies shooting in Connecticut, but the program was modified to give the full credit only to films over \$1 million, with a sliding scale for smaller projects. "Melancholy" qualified for the full credit before the change was made, Calvo said.

As he wraps up post-production and makes plans for his next project, he continues to advocate for the tax credit that has allowed him to accomplish this much and employ state filmmakers.

"It's not like software," Calvo said, "and you can make a living doing it.

"But it's a grueling business."