



Jeff Willoughby had been writing scripts, script treatments and short stories for quite a while before Rebecca Lynn came on the scene. The two were thrown together by accident when Becca took a waitressing job at the restaurant and bar where Jeff was employed as a part-time bartender. She was in the process of finishing her Bachelor's degree in English at the time, and was always anxiously looking for new and different things to expand her writing horizons. Jeff was searching for a way to save some of his stagnating scripts by adding a female character perspective. So when he asked her to come aboard as his writing partner, she readily agreed.

The upcoming release "Sun Moon Stars Rain" from CinemaAudio Productions was, at that time, an untitled, unfinished script that bore a coincidental resemblance to the then-just released film, "Six Days Seven Nights" starring Anne Heche and Harrison Ford. Jeff had been in the process of writing it months earlier when the hit movie trailer appeared on the little screen. "One night I was actually in the office writing, working on it, and my daughter called to me from the living room. She said, 'Dad, your movie is on TV!'" Understandably disheartened, Jeff relegated the incomplete script to the bottom of the growing pile of works he was producing. He sought advice from the writer's mentoring program that he was involved in, where anonymous writers, producers, and directors shared their thoughts and knowledge of the industry with aspiring scriptwriters. "The mentor told me to 'finish it, or you'll never finish it'" says Jeff. Once the script was done, then the mentor's advice was to go back and change things to preserve the originality. So when Jeff and Becca began writing together, Jeff thought it would be the right time to resurrect the old piece. They reconstructed, storyboarded, and used a variety of tandem writing techniques, including trading scenes over email, and they finished the script about seven months after the completion of their first endeavor, "End Run."

Now Jeff and Becca had two scripts and they were ready to try to take their work to Hollywood. Researching agents and studios using the internet and the Writer's Guide, they selected individuals and organizations they thought would be well-suited to their projects. As Becca graduated with her Bachelor's Degree from Bloomsburg University with honors, they drafted query letters and sent them out, beginning the waiting game.

And they waited. Sometimes agents would not reply at all, and still haven't to this day. Other times they would receive less-than-professional replies, such as the targeted agent scrawling "no thanks" on the back of the query letter and sending it back. After nearly a year without success, the two were searching for a way to make their voices heard. They were too excited about their work to simply let it rest, and after having read the scripts aloud one afternoon on Jeff's back deck, they decided to try to adapt both feature-length scripts for audio. This idea didn't come to fruition for nearly two more years, sitting on the back burner while Jeff recorded a solo music album, completed his pilot training and got his private pilot's license, and Becca earned her Master's Degree in English from Bucknell University.

All these things were going on while the two were working as waitress and bartender, and playing music together as the acoustic duo "Stardust" in local restaurants and bars.

The original idea was for the scripts to serve as the basis for productions for the visually impaired that would be similar to radio plays, and also a stimulating distant relation to audio books. Each feature would include actors and actresses for the different character voices, a Narrator to describe in real time the action that would be occurring 'on-stage,' sound effects to solidify the actions of the characters and help to describe their surroundings, and original music to score each production. The script was purposely written in the present tense, and sound effects layered 'under' the to-the-point narration so as to keep the acting priority, giving the listener the feeling of being involved in the action. The pair utilized a store of previous life experiences to help them make their idea more concrete; Jeff could contribute from his ever-increasing catalogue of songs, from his business experience, and from playing music most of his life with the regionally renowned rock band Hybrid Ice, as well as acting as sound engineer and director. Becca tried to channel her experiences with theatre from high school and college along with her skills as a writer. However, soon the two realized that their vision couldn't be realized on talent alone. They needed funds.

Together with Jeff's friend of many years, singer Emma Jane Conley, who worked for area non-profit organizations as a grant writer, Jeff and Becca worked to draft a grant proposal to solicit funds for the production of their project. Because of the product's obvious link to the visually impaired, they researched organizations that paid special attention to this target audience, attempting to market their idea to one such organization who might exchange funding for copies of the finished product to give to patients. After many phone calls and a few meetings, they found a medical non-profit organization that was as excited about their



idea as they were. After a meeting with the Director of Corporate and Foundation Funding in September of 2004, they were assured of funds, promised an advance, and felt positive they this was just the break they needed. They hurried home to begin work on the audio project, which at first involved day trips and afternoons spent creating sound effects that would be used in the background of “End Run,” “Sun Moon Stars Rain,” and a few other short productions. Another friend of Jeff’s, local musician Woody Wolfe, who performs at children’s hospitals around the world, loaned them a portable digital recorder that made it possible for the pair to record effects almost anywhere. Then the sounds could be transferred to Jeff’s computer, which began to serve as “Mission Control” for the project, storing hundreds of files of sound to be edited together later with the voices of the actors.

To cast the productions, Jeff and Becca made a list of all the characters in each feature, and tacked an ‘open call’ sheet to the wall in Studio Brick, the facility where Jeff teaches guitar, bass and Music Theory. Slowly, some of the students of Studio Brick, their parents, their friends, and even the owner and dance instructor at the Studio, Nancie Wagner, filled bit parts and supporting roles. Even Jeff’s flight instructor made his acting debut. They had no money yet to pay professional actors, and so free talent reigned. To Jeff and Becca’s surprise, most of the people involved with the project didn’t *want* to be paid; they only wanted to be involved. Of course everyone was promised a copy of the final product when it was completed. Although they were greeted with a chorus of “I’ve never done anything like this before!” the performances that filled the portable digital recorder with voices were anything but amateurish.

But the lead actors continued to elude them. While they searched for their principal actor and actress, they completed the short productions, “Just Another Day in the Park” and “The Oasis,” both of which have been licensed to be filmed in 2006 and will eventually be compiled onto a disc of shorts for release from CinemaAudio Productions. Everyone who listened to the shorts gave a positive endorsement, and the pair was reinforced on the fact that what they were doing had a market and an audience. On a lark, Becca contacted an actor from the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble, or BTE, a local professional theatre company. The student of English had admired Tom Byrn since his turn as Orsino in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and his role as an exuberant dog in the company’s original production, *Letters to the Editor*. Tom agreed to read the scripts. Days later, he called Jeff and volunteered to read for not just one, but both male leads. “Wow,” said the actor, “congratulations on two great stories.” He got both of the parts.

Now the only thing holding the duo back from beginning the process of studio recording the lead roles was finding a woman to fill the multifaceted and bilingual role of Maggie Bazarnik, the feisty waitress at the center of “Sun Moon Stars Rain.” “I considered it almost impossible to find someone of that caliber, under those terms, at a local level,” says Jeff. Just a couple days after Tom agreed to take both male roles, and perhaps just hours after Jeff and Becca had conferred on the phone trying to get ideas about where they could find someone to take on such a demanding part, Victoria Hall, a Mrs. Pennsylvania pageant contestant and parent of one of the Studio’s students, stepped into Jeff’s guitar teaching room. “Have you filled all of these roles yet?” she asked, pointing to the casting call. Victoria had previous theatre and comedy experience, spoke Spanish, and could modify her voice, allowing her to fill more than one role in both productions. But the best thing about Victoria was that she had the liveliness and vivacity of Maggie already. And she was thrilled to be a part of the production. Jeff called Becca. “You won’t believe what happened. Maggie literally walked into my room today,” he told her.

Meanwhile, emails bounced back and forth between Jeff and the Director of Corporate and Foundation Funding. Jeff created a one-scene demo of the product “End Run” to assist in the gathering of funds for the project, which the Director deemed “awesome.” Then one day he called to inform his new partners that their timing couldn’t be better. The radio play that was arguably the first reality show, Orson Welles’ *War of the Worlds* broadcast, was being produced into a what was touted as “the most expensive film ever made” by Hollywood director Steven Spielberg. The movie, due out on June 29, 2005, starred superstar Tom Cruise and others. Jeff and Becca couldn’t believe their luck; if they could finish the production of “Sun Moon Stars Rain” in time for the release of the film, they could ride the coattails of the publicity generated by the film version of the most notorious audio production ever. They redoubled their efforts to get the recording completed. Still, no funds materialized.

The recording of “End Run” and “Sun Moon Stars Rain” took place over the holiday season of 2004. Jeff and Becca had still not received the grant advance from the medical conglomerate, so they were operating on a shoestring budget, financed partly by the sale of small collectible items on Ebay that Jeff had accumulated. The payment of any advance was also delayed by the lack of funds necessary to file the paperwork that would change Jeff and Becca into Stardust Creative Enterprises, LLC; the parent company of a multi-



divisional corporation that includes CinemaAudio Productions, Pilot Records, and Swinging From the Trees Music (a music publishing company). Insert URL. Fortunately for the two of them, Jeff's years of involvement with legendary rock group Hybrid Ice had produced a recording studio, built from the ground up by the members of the band in the late 1970's. Hybrid Ice had officially retired in 1998 and reunited in 2002 to do reunion shows each Fall with all original members. But the studio they constructed was still up and running under the name Saturation Acres, operated by Paul Smith and Brett Alexander of the Badlees. Paul and Brett agreed to defer payment for the recording for sixty days, hopefully for enough time to get the grant advance and pay the actors and studio, and Paul even agreed to do a vocal role performance for a character in "End Run."

Because of the professional nature and preparedness of the actors and production staff, the recording process for both features took only eleven hours, but due to everyone's "other" work schedules, they had to spread out the process over about three days. Since most of the sound effects and other character voices were already recorded, now it was up to Jeff to edit the main action into the framework of the audio production. In addition, there was still the LLC paperwork to file, the website to design, marketing strategies to work out, a test marketing group to research and create. In addition to all of this, Jeff was still teaching guitar and playing with "Stardust," while Becca was working anywhere from three to five part-time jobs to keep herself afloat after the closing of the restaurant that had supplied additional income for the pair.

Then bad news struck. In February, when Jeff was only pages away from having all of the studio recordings edited into the mixes, the pair received a letter from the medical conglomerate. Because eventually they hoped their product could be sold to the mass market and they were not purely a non-profit entity, the funding had been pulled. This left Becca and Jeff with eleven hours of studio time to pay for, and some very talented and enthusiastic actors to tell that they would not be getting any money for their work any time in the foreseeable future. Devastated, Jeff lost sleep wrestling with what to tell the people who had graciously accepted the terms of the proposed grant and gone ahead with the recording on nothing but his word. With both he and Becca barely able to pay their own bills, how could they be expected to pay for the services they had asked for assuming grant money? Would all their time and effort be wasted because they couldn't afford what it would take to get the product finished? No way. "I am from the world of rock and roll" said Jeff. "You tell me I can't do something, I'll do it. It only makes me stronger. I've been that way my whole life." The pair pushed on with the project, scraping together what they could.

Victoria and Tom were unfazed. Both of them articulated how innovative and exciting they thought the project was, and agreed to allow Jeff and Becca to release the product that included their performances without being paid so that it could coincide with *War of the Worlds*. Jeff launched a giant Ebay auction and made enough money to pay off the studio. Then, after more than a month of editing an average of ten hours a day around his guitar teaching schedule, the pair's combined efforts had completed the audio editing, the cover design for the disc, the licensing negotiations with Twentieth Century Fox to license a clip of audio from the film "Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison" for the production, the legal paperwork and a featured song at the end the production of "Sun Moon Stars Rain" literally on Jeff's fiftieth birthday.

As work begins on the editing of "End Run," which is due to be released in July 2005, only one scene has yet to be recorded. In a dream sequence in this story, the main character is a guest on the David Letterman Show and has a short conversation with the late-night host and his cohort, Paul Schaffer. So far, Jeff and Becca have been unable to find voice impersonators convincing enough to record the parts of David and Paul. But with the way their luck has been running, their newest crazy idea is to ask David himself. David and Paul's parts could be recorded live on the show and edited into the script as it already exists, lending famous cameo appearances to their small product with big ideas. Will it work? It remains to be seen. "I know we won't promise them any money this time," says Becca. "Maybe they'll call it 'Stupid Producer Tricks.'" Since Jeff and Becca haven't taken 'no' for an answer yet, it'll at least be an exciting ride.