

MAKING MOVIES

MICHIGAN GOES HOLLYWOOD

All the world is a stage, but officials in Michigan recently decided to steal the spotlight by offering a tax incentive designed to make the Great Lakes state the backdrop for more films.

It's officially called the film production credit, and it offers a tax credit for 40 to 42 percent of a production company's expenditures in making a film.

How does it work?

In order to qualify for any type of tax credit, a production company must spend at least \$50,000 in the state of Michigan. This alone qualifies the company for a tax credit that covers 40 percent of its expenses.

A company can earn an extra tax credit worth 2 percent of its expenses if those expenses are incurred in one of Michigan's 103 "Core Communities," as defined by the Michigan Film Office. Lansing is one of the state's "Core Communities," which also included Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor and Marquette and Genesee and Royal Oak townships.

Applying for the incentive

Applications for the film production credit include information about the production of the film, such as estimated Michigan expenditures, project type (the credit extends to any media project, not just films), Michigan production days, local hires and more.

Companies also are required to send copies of the script and insurance documents. After approval, pre-production must begin within 90 days.

Movies made in Michigan

In 2006, "Dreamgirls" and "Transformers" both received tax incentives from Michigan, as did "Jumper" and "Semi-Pro" in 2007.

In addition to "Gran Torino," the following movies began production in Michigan and received the film production credit in 2008:

- "Street Boss"
- "Whip It!"
- "Youth in Revolt"
- "The Job"
- "All's Faire in Love"
- "Red and Blue Marbles"
- "Miss January"
- "Offspring"
- "Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story"
- "Butterfly Effect: Revelation"

For more information on Michigan's film production credit, visit the Michigan Film Office's Web site at michigan.gov/filmoffice.

FACES PLACED



HELLO, MY NAME IS
Erin Tans

When Erin Tans was 5 years old, her parents thought her desire to take riding lessons would be a passing phase. Little did they know it would become the biggest passion of her life. "I bought my first horse when I was 10, and I worked a lot and saved up all my money," the animal science senior said. After selling her horse when she came to MSU four years ago, Tans began to think there may be other students in a similar situation, and she set out to start the Dressage Club. She is now the president of the Dressage Club and member of the dressage team. "Dressage is not a well-known sport, and we got close and made friends, and we're still friends now," Tans said. "I really just wanted to create an environment where people could ride for enjoyment without the financial burden because it's an expensive sport, so we do a lot of fundraising."

— Compiled by Abaries Farhod, photo by Nick Dentamaro, The State News

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Wednesday

MSU student appears in 'Gran Torino' with film legend Clint Eastwood



JEANA-DEE ALLEN/THE STATE NEWS

"When I drove her to the audition, I didn't even think about it. I didn't even think about auditioning. Things just happen when you least expect it," psychology junior Choua Kue, right, said about taking her sister Pao Kue, 17, left, of Grand Blanc to audition for "Gran Torino" and getting a part herself. Pao Kue said her sister has always brought honor to the family by taking advantage of every opportunity she has. "Someone once said, 'If you take a chance then you at least have a chance,'" Choua Kue said. "I'm very blessed."

MAKING HER 'GRAN' DEBUT

"I'm really just a really, really silly girl, so to see myself being portrayed as the girl-next-door or whatever, I mean, (my friends) think it's funny."

Choua Kue,
psychology junior

"By the time we got there she wasn't ready to go in yet and there was no one there, so I was like, 'I know the lines, so why not?' So I went in and I got a callback and I got a role," said Choua Kue, who was eventually cast as Youa, a potential love interest of another main character, Thao.

"I was very, very surprised. Obviously I didn't go in expecting anything. I knew they were seeing thousands of people so I was very shocked," she said. "I got a callback after my second audition, about a week later, and they said (Eastwood) cast himself, so it was very flattering."



Pao Kue

By Julie Baker
THE STATE NEWS

She's a Grand Blanc resident, a mentor in Shaw Hall, and a psychology junior who wants to get her doctorate when she graduates. Like many other average students, Choua Kue went to the local movie theater to see "Gran Torino" last Friday with friends. But the difference between Kue and the hundreds of others that filled the theater prior to the movie's start was that she was preparing to see a familiar face share the big screen with the movie's star and director, Clint Eastwood. That face was her own.

Pao Kue said although she was surprised her sister got the part, she was very happy for her. The two even practiced the lines again the night before Kue's shooting began.

"I think my sister's just really natural with acting," said Pao Kue, who got to spend more than half an hour on the film set one day. "Even when we were practicing, she was really, really good at it."

Although she took drama class in high school, Choua Kue said she never really thought she would get anything out of it — especially not to get paid to share the screen with a legend like Eastwood in a movie that grossed

an estimated \$29.5 million in its first weekend at the box office. Kue was one of the many Hmong people from Michigan cast in the movie. The Hmong are an ethnic group from the mountain regions of China and southeast Asia.

Ready to roll
"Gran Torino" is one of the most high-profile films to be shot in Michigan following the state's passage of the Michigan Film Incentive, which gives production companies a refundable, assignable tax credit of up to 42 percent. The screenplay originally set the film in Minnesota, but the tax break inspired Eastwood to change the location to feature met-

"During break, one of my girls messaged me on Facebook and she was like, 'Oh my gosh, I was at the movie and I thought I saw you and I stayed to see your name in the credits. ... That was so cool,' and I'm like yeah," said Kue. "I'm kind of shy about that stuff. I don't go around like, 'Oh, I was in this movie.' If they ask me, I'll say yes. It's really not me at all."

Why not?

It all started last July, when Kue was giving her 17-year-old sister, Pao, a ride to Troy to audition for the movie. The two rehearsed lines on the way there, practicing two excerpts of dialogue from the film between two of the main characters.

Nervous when they arrived at the audition, Pao Kue said she kept repeating the lines in her head.

ro Detroit, as well as many of the area's Hmong residents. "Gran Torino" is said to be the first major-studio film to feature the Hmong.

Shooting for the film began in August and took about a month, and with only a few scenes to shoot, Kue said she was on set getting her makeup and hair done every day for about a week.

"I was not sure what to expect because I had no idea what the setting was going to be like. I knew that there was probably going to be a ton of trailers and stuff," Kue said. "But when I went there I was surprised at how organized everything was. They had great tim-

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To see Kue in a clip from the movie and get local showtimes, visit statenews.com