

'Ping Pong Summer' filming in Ocean city now in full swing

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OCEAN CITY — For 15-year-old Emmi Shockley, having the opportunity to shoot a movie in her hometown is a dream come true.

“(It) was all too perfect,” she said. “For me, it adds an extra connection to it. They’re portraying my town in such a positive way and getting to be a part of it is amazing because I’ve live here my whole life and I’ve always wanted to be an actress, so the two put together, it’s just amazing.”

Shockley will play the female lead, Stacy Summers, in Michael Tully’s “Ping Pong Summer,” which began shooting in the resort two weeks ago. The movie tells the story of a boy’s family vacation to Ocean City in the summer of 1985. Shockley described her character as “the Ocean City pretty girl,” who’s a little bit quirky and has an air of mystery to her.

“She’s a character that’s going to keep you guessing throughout the movie,” she said.

Producer Michael Gottwald said it was important for him and Tully to find kids from the area — who join seasoned actors including Susan Sarandon, Lea Thompson and John Hannah — to help tell the story.

And although none of them were actually born in the 1980s, Tully said it wasn’t about giving them a crash-course through the decade, but just changing simple things like the vocabulary.

“It’s really like changing ‘swag’ to ‘fresh,’ ” he said. “It’s more like what it would feel like when you have a crush on someone, it didn’t matter if ’85 or 2013.”

It was important to Tully for the film to feel as authentic as possible in representing Ocean City in 1985. Landmarks, such as Paul Revere Smorgasbord, Old Pro Golf on 137th Street and Trimper’s will all be featured in the movie.

Thankfully, for him, many of these locations have been preserved and are from the time period, he said.

Being genuine to the resort and using names, such as Thrasher’s French Fries, was also important to Tully.

He believes in doing so, it will not only resonate with residents and visitors, but also people who’ve never been here before.

“I think the more specific we are and more honorable we are to our environment here and our community the more people will connect, even if they’ve never been here,” Tully said. “I think it will be really fun for the people of the Delmarva area, but I love the idea of showing this in (other areas) and sort of people not believing that this town is here.”

Sarandon who is co-cowner of SPiN, a ping pong club in New York City, learned of the movie from her partners in the franchise and described the script as “a really sweet, generous story.” Although she only just got the town, she’s excited to see the area, already having checked out Berlin.

For the Scotland-born Hannah, shooting a film in Ocean City has given him the opportunity to experience a part of the world he would’ve never seen, he said.

“I think the beach is amazing, I don’t think I’ve seen a longer, more beautiful beach,” said Hannah, when asked what’s stood out the most about filming in town.

“I’ve been fortunate ... getting out to Assateague, which is just the most stunning, stunning locations, I was breathless when I got there.”

Tully, who started writing the script in the 1990s, said he’s very excited to be able to film the movie in the town where he vacationed growing up.

“I do think we’re making one of the most fun and strangest commercials for a town ever in a narrative feature film, but it was important to me to do that and I’m just so, so thankful we stuck to our guns and we’re here,” he said.