

# PRESS ARGUS-COURIER

## Downtown transformed into turn-of-century town

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Filming has begun in downtown Van Buren on a new production by a local Emmy-award winning director.

Devon Parks and his crew with Mad Possum Pictures have transformed historic downtown Van Buren into a turn-of-the-century town complete with costumed actors and dirt-covered streets for the filming of "The Riot Act."

"The Riot Act" is written and directed by Parks, and produced by Parks and Lauren Sweetser. The movie stars Brett Cullen, Connor Price, Brandon Keener and Sweetser.

A description of the storyline on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) states that "after a quiet murder seen by only three people, two avengers bring to life the idea of a ghost in attempt for justice."

Many extras for the film are being cast from local residents, including Van Buren City Planner Joe Hurst.

"The City of Van Buren is proud to work with hometown director Devon Parks on this major motion picture," Hurst said. "This isn't the first time Van Buren has been in the movies and we hope to attract more productions in the future. Other cities have shown us that movie productions can be a big benefit to a local economy."

Hurst noted that historic downtown Van Buren is the ideal setting for scenes in the film.

Dirt was moved on to Main Street from 4th to 8th streets on Nov. 10, and those areas have been closed to traffic for filming, Hurst said. The dirt and is expected to be clean up today.

"Downtown merchants met with representatives from the film, so they were aware of the street closing," Hurst said. "Many of the merchants have been assisting the production from the beginning and some have been given small roles in the film as extras."

Businesses on Main Street have remained open during the time of the street closings.

An official call for extras has been posted to the Mad Possum website. The film also is using horses, carriages and wagons from across the state.

Filming of the movie is taking place in Fort Smith, as well.

Parks is best known locally for his films "Step Into: The King Opera House," "The Rocking Horse Winner" and "Step Into: Miss Laura's."

Parks and his former partner Chuck King won an Emmy for Best Short Format Program, and Parks for best director at the 39th annual Mid-America Emmy Awards ceremony Oct. 3, 2016, in St. Louis, Mo., for "Step Into: The King Opera House" about the early history of the downtown Van Buren historic opera house.