

PLAYBACK

Anagram signs Val Kilmer

by: Ilona Beiks

May 22, 2008

Top Gun's Iceman has signed on to join *The Thaw*, an eco-thriller feature by Vancouver-based Anagram Pictures.

The \$5-million feature, the first under Anagram's Telefilm Canada slate deal involving Maple Pictures, is set to begin five weeks of shooting on June 16 in Williams Lake, BC, with Val Kilmer in the cast.

Mark A. Lewis (*Ill Fated*) co-wrote the film with brother Michael and will direct the chilling tale about the release of a deadly prehistoric parasite via a woolly mammoth that is discovered in a melting ice cap. Faced with a potentially global epidemic, four ecology students must destroy the parasite before it reaches the rest of civilization. Martha MacIsaac (*Superbad*) stars as one of the students and the daughter of Kilmer (*Déjà vu*, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*).

Anagram producer Mary Ann Waterhouse says the film holds a lot of "firsts" for the production company. She admits that at first glance a horror film doesn't seem a fit for the company that made *The Delicate Art of Parking* and *Elijah*.

"But this is not a gratuitous horror film. This is a thinking-man's horror film," she says. "It's a fit for Anagram because our mandate is that our productions have something important to say to the world. This is a socially relevant film wrapped up in the trappings of a horror film. There's the threat of global warming, and then there is the debate of what is the appropriate response to the threat -- who's the real parasite?"

The Thaw also marks the first coproduction with Brightlight Pictures. Brightlight heads Shawn Williamson and Stephen Hegyes will share executive producer duties with Blake Corbet at Anagram. Waterhouse produces with Trent Carlson and Rob Neilsen.

Anagram signed a multi-year output deal with Maple Pictures in March, with an assist from Telefilm Canada's Slate Development Pilot Program, which gave Anagram a \$250,000 line of credit to develop four features, including *The Thaw*.

Maple handles Canadian distribution, and is attached to all four of Anagram's Telefilm projects. Voltage Pictures announced in Cannes it will handle international rights.

"Our strategy is -- we've secured the money to make the movie, now we're going to shoot the film, and we're aiming to complete the movie around Christmas, and then after, show a finished, complete film to the U.S. [buyers]," says Waterhouse.

