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## LeDuc turned into 'Horror House' for movie

Keith Grauman The Hastings Star-Gazette

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Aside from the occasional wine tasting and private party, summer nights are pretty uneventful at the LeDuc House. However, over the last week those quiet nights have been filled with fake blood, evil laughter and piles of bodies.

A small group of independent, Midwest moviemakers have been using the LeDuc as the setting for their feature-length film, "Horror House."

Scenes of the movie are being shot in nearly every room of the house, including some the public rarely gets the chance to see, such as the attic and the basement.



Crew members and actor Gary Keast prepare for a scene while filming inside the LeDuc house in Hastings, last month.

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producer and editor, read about the LeDuc in a Star Tribune newspaper article in 2006. After taking a tour of the house,

They're also using rooms people may be more familiar with, like the dining room and the study, where a video about the history of the house is usually shown to visitors.

Justen Overlander, the film's writer,

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he was convinced it was the perfect setting for the movie.

Jim Morgan, the film's sound mixer, agreed.

"It's leaky, creaky and freaky," Morgan said.

The plot of "Horror House" is best summed up on the film's Web site, [www.horrorhousemovie.com](http://www.horrorhousemovie.com).

"Aspiring actors and actresses are lured by a twisted filmmaker to an empty house to shoot a horror movie. The movie becomes frighteningly real when the attractive cast members are killed off slowly and methodically while the cameras roll."

That "twisted filmmaker," named "PZ" in the movie, is played by Gary Keast. He said the house is "perfect for the story."

However, the house that the LeDuc is in essence, "playing," in the movie, is supposed to be abandoned, run down and in the middle of nowhere.

The crew had to make plenty of temporary and creative improvisations to the LeDuc's interior to make it fit the script, as well as work with within the space the house provided without damaging it in any way.

Amy Thompson, the script supervisor, said she pictured the house as it is in the script, but was surprised by how nice it was on the inside.

"It's actually been a lot of work trying to make (the house) look bad," she said.

A drowning-scene in the bathtub of an upstairs bathroom was especially difficult. Chad Martin, the film's director, executive producer and writer, explained the logistical difficulty of shooting in a bathroom approximately 10 by six feet with a bathtub in it.

"We had two actors, Nick (Evert) with the camera, me and a boom operator, all in that tiny bathroom, with three lights and a bathtub full of hot water," Martin said.

Keast, who's in the scene, said the heat was the most

difficult part.

“When I opened the door to that bathroom, it was like I was opening an oven to take out a batch of cookies,” he said.

However, Martin said the cramped bathroom made for a more intense scene overall because the camera angle had to be so close in.

“It looks like a huge house from the outside,” Nick Evert, the film’s director of photography and executive producer said. “But every time we go into a room, it seems to get smaller.”

One nice thing about the film’s plot is that it’s a “movie-in-a-movie,” so the crew doesn’t have to be as meticulous about making sure things like lights, cords and other equipment are out of every shot. On the contrary, often “real” equipment in is the camera’s frame when the tapes are rolling.

All the scenes at the LeDuc take place on one night in the script, but are being shot over a period of about a week. When it’s nighttime, there’s less to worry about, but during the day the crew members have to be careful to block out windows and make sure no daylight gets into the shots.

The cast and crew have had several 14-hour days during the course of the shoot at several locations, and it’s been no different at the LeDuc. They start filming in the early afternoon and usually don’t get done until the next morning.

“We’re usually leaving when the sun is coming up,” Overlander said. “It’s like we’re on an opposite schedule. It takes lots of coffee, caffeine and energy drinks.”

Because the house in the script is in the middle of nowhere and the LeDuc sits on a U.S. Highway, the film’s sound technicians have to pay close attention while scenes are being filmed.

“You’ve got to deal with things like airplanes and thunder,” Overlander said.

“And sirens,” Morgan said.

While scenes are being filmed, Morgan listens to the audio

on a pair of headphones from another room, making sure the microphone isn't picking up too much background noise and the actors can be heard properly, among other things.

While it may seem like a simple detail, Overlander said the film's sound quality is of the utmost importance.

"Sound can really make or break a movie," Overlander said.

Morgan said inside the house, the dialogue and effects have been sounding great.

"There's good sound reverberation," he said.

Overlander's ultimate goal for the movie is for a large distribution company to buy the rights to it and market it. He's trying to have it done by September to submit to the Sundance Film Festival.

Depending on what happens there, it could be 2008 or 2009 before any members of the public are able to see the movie. Overlander said it can often be a long and tedious process.

"It's all about starting and getting your foot in the door," he said.

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