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## 'Secret Life, Secret Death' goes public

By Erin Berge

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**D**irector Genevieve Davis, alumna of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has returned to show one of her recent creations, “Secret Life, Secret Death” at a discounted price to students Wednesday, May 2 at the Barrymore Theater.

This movie is not an ordinary independent film—it was created on a budget of \$1,700, and by the end of production, a remarkably low total of \$5,500. Davis took the time to talk with The Daily Cardinal about her historic film, how it has improved her life and her hopes to inspire the audience as well.

A budget so low for a film has to have some ingenious mind behind it, but Davis thinks otherwise.

“Making a movie is more than money,” Davis said. “It’s not a matter of finding people—it’s inspiring people to come on board and be a part of it whether there is money involved or not.”

And there was no trouble finding people for “Secret Life, Secret Death.” The film was set in the 1920s when gangsters, such as Al Capone, were traveling in and out of Wisconsin. While there have been numerous movies made to explain the harsh realities of men involved in these gangs, Davis wanted to expose a point of view that is rarely seen, and one that is far more personal.

“You see all these romanticized versions of gang legends in Chicago,” Davis said. “And the women are always sort of just like peripheral set dressing. You never really hear, ‘well what is her story?’ It turns out that a lot of these women were demolished by their experience, and my grandmother was one of them.”

As a child, Davis did not hear stories of her grandmother often. In fact, her grandmother was seldom spoken of because of the activities she had been involved in.

This unknown family history is what gave Davis inspiration for the film, because she knew that there was a story waiting to be discovered.

“I know that my dad had a hard childhood,” Davis said. “But it wasn’t until my father had passed away that I started thinking about the funeral he told us he went to when he was five years old, that he went to Big Jim Colosimo’s funeral in Chicago.”

The process of discovering historical events, such as Big Jim Colosimo’s funeral (a predecessor to Al Capone), that were also connected to her family history brought up explanations to family issues, such as alcoholism—a common disease of the family. However, Davis found this unraveling to be rewarding.

“If you can turn around and face [the truth], it’s very helpful because then it’s not chasing you throughout your life,” Davis said.

The experience not only brought closure for Davis, but also a film filled with an authentic portrayal of the 1920s. Classic Ford vehicles, costumes vintage music—mostly recorded in Milwaukee—complimented each scene.

“The cars were just kind of serendipity, pure serendipity,” Davis said. “You just do it on the fly—you just start something and you have people get on board.”

This idea is what Davis is trying to get across to her audience by showing this film. During her years at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Davis not only learned the skills of film making, but also the courage needed to go out and make her vision a reality. Larry Junkins, one of her professors, largely influenced and inspired her driven attitude.

“It’s a part of doing something new and doing something different,” Davis said.

“Following your creative vision is wrestling with this huge thing that you don’t know how it’s going to resolve. But I know now from studying with Larry that it can resolve and it will resolve, if you hang onto the tigers tail.”

When asked if she would do anything different with the film, Davis conceded that she would most likely have produced a completely different movie. But as of right now, “Secret Life, Secret Death” is what Davis has to present at the Barrymore, and is proud to do so.

There will also be a Q & A with Davis, and a few cast members after the film. Who knows, you may discover even more about what can happen with the help of those around you.

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