

GREECE LOVER

Actress, model, film producer, the impressive Deirdre Lorenz came to Greece five years ago to film a movie in Santorini... The result is a romantic comedy titled "Santorini Blue", now searching for its place in the cinematic sun.

By Nikos Fotakis

«We arrived in Santorini with nothing but two cents in the pocket and an idea in our heads». Even through the phone, even separated by the – half a planet away – distance between here and New York, I can sense the determination and power of Deirdre Lorenz. The same determination with which the Oregonian beauty took her career in her own hands, instead of sweating for a small part in a tv show (like the "Sopranos" and "Law & Order: SVU" on which she has appeared) or a magazine photoshoot. Putting to use her business administration degree (as well as her studies in the acclaimed Stella Adler drama school), the actress created her own production company, named "Thira Films". The name is an obvious homage to Santorini, the place where the first feature of the company, "Santorini Blue" was shot. A feature film that took five years to complete (this is the time needed for "two cents" to multiply) but which is currently trying its luck in a series of small independent film festivals, like the one in Hoboken, New Jersey (in which it won the audience award) or the Toronto Independent Film Festival (known as "Toronto Indy"), in which it was shown last Sunday.

But lets get back to the "idea" which was in the first-time producer's luggage, when she got to the beautiful island of the Kyklades in 2005, along with director, screen-writer and actor Matthew Panepinto.

"We had already been in Santorini together before, attending a wedding and we were enchanted by the scenery. It was the ideal setting for a film, a wonderful place to fall back in love". This idea became a script: the story of a couple of married New-Yorkers going through a crisis. When he cheats on her, she abandons him and travels to Santorini in a quest for herself, looking at the seaview from the Caldera and flirting with ruthless "kamakis", while her ex is trying to win her back. The recipe for every self-respecting romantic comedy, only in this case we don't have a mass produced studio film, but a hand made project.

As a producer and leading lady, Deirdre had to face numerous obstacles, no less of which was the raising the funds necessary for the shoot – but also the adjustment to the "Greek way" of working. "I'm used to very different conditions", she remembers with a laugh. "Different hours, different pace. We all had to compromise, to meet in the middle, but everything turned out great. The greek crew were all very professional and put a lot of personal work in order for us to make it". She distinctly remembers a shooting at the Caldera location, almost ruined when a sudden rain threatened to blow everything up – including the

budget. “Everybody came to help, they were really supportive and, in the end, when the scene was shot, it went better than we could ever plan”.

Organized and an impeccable professional herself, she doesn’t seem to have picked up any of the usual “greek” habits, but she does confess that she cannot imagine living without her beloved “greek salad”: “What was mostly impressive is the way you eat, the way you share your food. Getting together and setting all the plates on the table, it’s amazing. I think this is what made us bond the most, while working on the film”.

Among the people working on the film, a few names – and faces – stand out: those of half the regular cast of “Law & Order” – Dan Florek, Richard Belzer, Ice-T and Diane Neal. Chance? Not at all. Lorenz and Panepinto have appeared at the popular show and managed to get their actor friends to play in their film – especially Florek (the show’s Captain Cragen) is credited as a co-producer.

One would expect that the Greek state, which, at the time of the shooting was on a quest, through the Ministry of Tourism to get films made in Greece, as a means of promoting the country through cinema, would jump on the occasion and “adopt” “Santorini Blue”. Yet, as Deirdre stoically admits, nobody ever was found to help, nor during the shooting, neither now, that the film is looking for distribution. “We have submitted the film to the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, but we haven’t got a reply yet”, she says, without complaining: “I feel very lucky to have been able to make this dream come true, to shoot this film in this magic place, to meet so many great people and now I’m ready to show it to the world”. The first reactions are definitely positive: “What everybody says is that the film feels like a post-card, a love letter to Greece”. And the truth is, especially these days, we do need a love confession.