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Community Connections

Production Begins for Joint Hollywood-Georgia Film



David Imedashvili and Renee Harlin during a film shoot in Tsalka, Georgia

Theme: Film Production

From: Tbilisi, Georgia

Program Dates: June 11–July 3, 2008

Host Organization: International Visitors Council of Los Angeles; Los Angeles, California

David Imedashvili, a producer and studio owner from Tbilisi, has just started work on a new film about the experiences of an American journalist caught in the crossfire of the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. The film is a joint venture between Georgian and American movie studios.

Imedashvili was inspired to take on the project after a 2008 Community Connections Film Production program in Los Angeles, California. The exchange fostered connections that led to the joint production. “The CC exchange helped me understand the system of film production in the U.S.,” noted Imedashvili, “and how Georgian movies can be marketed worldwide”.

After Imedashvili’s CC program, he returned to the U.S. several times to plan the film, eventually signing a contract with a Hollywood-based production studio. The movie, which is being shot outside of Tbilisi throughout October, is directed by Rene Harlin, whose credits include *Die Hard 2* and *Cliffhanger*. It is coproduced by Rex Film’s George Lascu. The cast includes Rupert Friend, Val Kilmer and Andy Garcia in the role of Mikheil Saakashvili. The scheduled release date is May 2010.

Film investors include Madneuli Gold Investment and the Georgian Film Center. The Georgian government is also providing substantial support, including military equipment valued at \$40,000.

The movie presents an excellent opportunity to establish Georgia as an attractive country for film production, with its natural beauty, low production costs, and easy business regulations. While Georgia has a rich tradition of cinematography, many Soviet-trained directors are unaccustomed to the more efficient, shorter production cycles of Western directors. With the first movie of such scale being shot in Georgia, Imedashvili hopes that young Georgian talent will learn from the U.S. model.

While the movie is still in production, Imedashvili is already making plans for new projects, many targeted to his native Georgian audiences. He is also exploring ways to develop trainings for Georgian movie professionals in modern movie production and management, in an effort to breathe new life into Georgian cinematography. “Film production is all about a coordinated team work, so no matter how talented a director is, a professional lighting man is as important,” he said. “And with the right training, Georgia has unlimited potential to become a leader in the region”.