

Shandaken's country roads to be featured in Vogue Italia

It was a sight so unusual that it turned heads and even stopped traffic one recent spring weekend in Shandaken.

Seventeen stylish and important people made stops along some country roads in and around the community.

They included international fashion models, producers, a photographer, photo assistants, makeup artists and hair stylists.

They were part of a Vogue Italia photo shoot for an upcoming spread in the quarterly fashion magazine.

Why Shandaken?

Laurent Rejto of the Hudson Valley Film Commission and Woodstock Film Festival said the production company, Black Market Productions, was seeking locations for an editorial photo spread that would "exemplify an old-fashioned, timeless, romantic road trip through the countryside, with stops at vintage service stations, fruit stands and scenic vistas including waterfalls, covered bridges and other points of interest."

The Hudson Valley Film Commission promptly sent them photo samples, and Rejto said they fell in love with the areas of Shandaken, Phoenicia and Mt. Tremper, where they shot at many locations, including Hanover Farms in Mt. Tremper.

Chamber President Ward Todd ran into the photo crew on a recent weekend and snapped a few shots of his own.

It also got him thinking about how good these kinds of events are for the local economy.

"The (financial) impact is huge, even though we do not get involved in negotiating fees or anything that has to do with money," said Rejto.

All 17 of the people involved in the recent Vogue Italia shoot stayed at the Emerson Resort and Spa during their 3- to 4-day production. They also hired a few local people, ate at local establishments, shopped in area stores and rented some of the locations.

Rejto said other major productions that have shot in the Hudson Valley have had an even greater financial impact.

"When 'War of the Worlds' shot in the area for six days, the entire crew rented 450 area hotel and motel rooms and hired 1,000 extras at \$80 a night for the three days involved in shooting the ferry-crossing scene alone."

"That was about \$240,000 just on extras and that didn't include their food and other related costs...during those cold December days. Productions of this kind are an economic boon that simultaneously attracts tourists to and visibility for the region," Rejto explained.

That's not unusual. One report showed that after the film "Thelma & Louise" was shot in Canyonlands, Utah, visitor numbers rose by almost 23 percent.

Many other examples, including "Field of Dreams," demonstrate that films can create tourism opportunities.

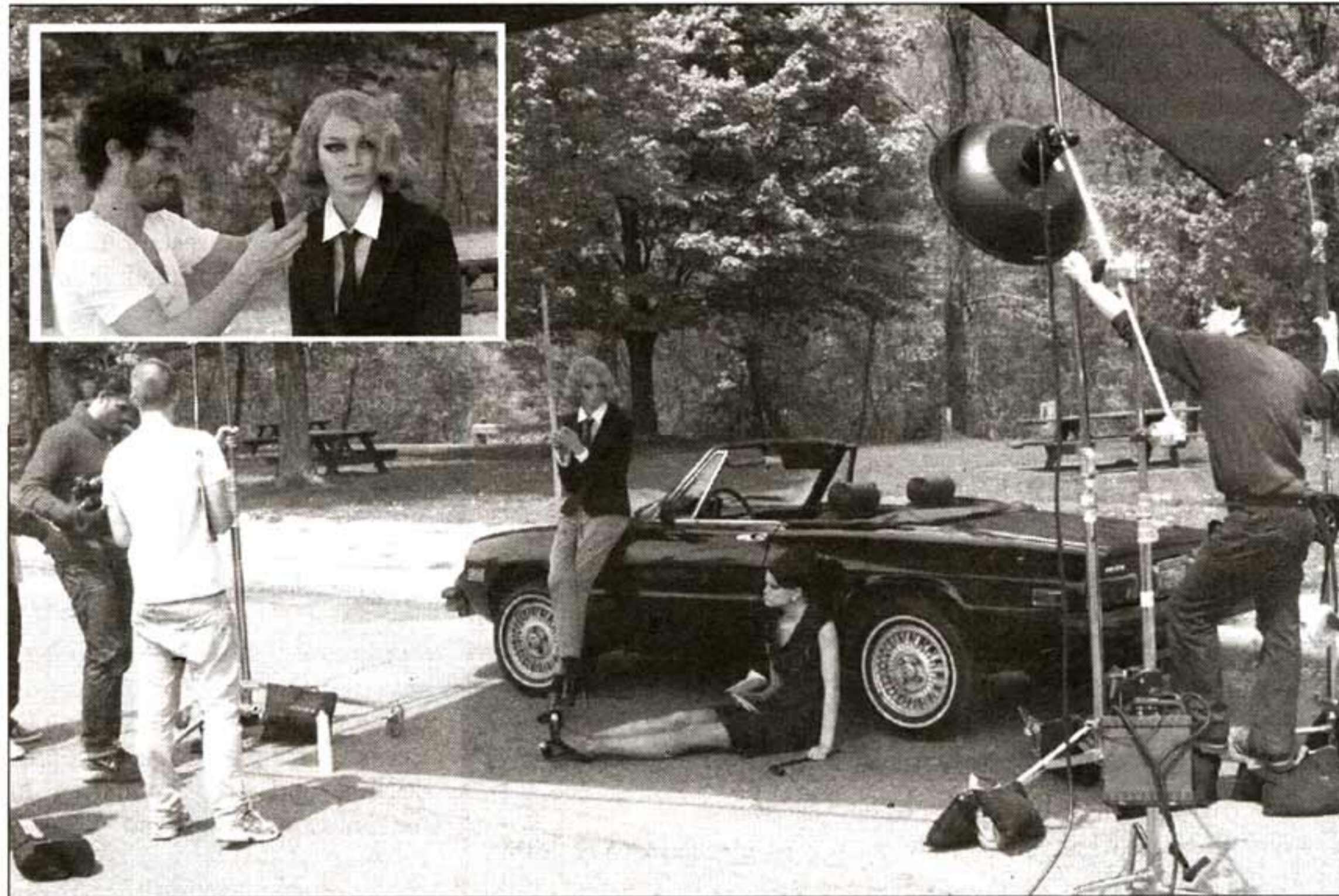
"When the National Geographic documentary 'Human Footprint' shot here in 2007, they hired 30 local crew members and additional talent to appear in the film."

"They used 19 paid locations, rented hotel rooms, private homes, administrative offices, a film studio space to shoot in, storage space and the lead production team, which was from the United Kingdom, spent several months dining at local restaurants and driving around in rented vehicles. All told, they spent about \$2 million," Rejto said.

The Hudson Valley Film Commission works year round to attract and assist studio and independent features, print, television, new media, short films, student projects and TV advertising.

Rejto said since its inception in 2000, the Hudson Valley Film Commission has worked to create a new strategic economic development vision by serving as a conduit for pre-production, production and post-production in the Hudson Valley and Catskill region.

A vibrant film and new media community now exists, and the HVFC is poised to make this sustainable business opportunity a part of the region's economic growth, she added.



Technicians and models prepare for a shot in Shandaken, which will appear in an upcoming issue of *Vogue Italia*

The HVFC attracts many productions through direct solicitations with producers—many of whom visit the area during the Woodstock Film Festival.

Other productions come via referrals from industry friends, government agencies or through the website (www.HudsonValleyFilmCommission.org), which provides a bounty of information.

"HVFC needs to be constantly on the ball about productions, and staff literally go out and tell people that they should be shooting in our area and why," said Rejto.

"State and local commissions have become very competitive, so we try to make a great impression in a timely manner. The film festival helps by bringing many emerging and established filmmakers to the area."

For example, she said "The Cake Eaters" would never have shot locally if HVFC staff members hadn't convinced the producers they knew through the film festival.

HVFC is now trying to convince these same producers to shoot their upcoming \$3 million horror film here instead of Connecticut.

Staff members also work on a lot of projects that people never hear about because the productions end up going to other states or not getting the necessary financing.

"There are a lot of factors that need to be met before someone agrees to move a production to this area, so it's always a thrill and an accomplishment when it happens," Rejto said.

Future productions include a feature film, 'An Invisible Sign of My Own,' which will be shooting in Kingston and Saugerties for five days. It will star America Ferrera of "Ugly Betty" fame.

In July, the HVFC expects "Splinterheads" to settle into Kingston for a 6-to-8 week shoot.