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# THE ZOMBIE DIARIES

They came to my house,  
didn't wear my pajamas, and  
didn't take my vodka.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

**R**ay Wise has starred in everything from *Cat People* to *Twin Peaks*, *Robocop*, *Mad Men*, and *Girl With the Tramp Stamp Tattoo*. Now he's starring in my house at 155 Western Promenade, wearing PJs that look disturbingly like mine, walking up the stairs to shoot a scene in Kyle Rankin's *Night of the Living Deb*.

Have you ever met someone who seems more comfortable in your surroundings than you do?

Please consider this cautionary tale if ever you plan to open your home to a feature-film crew shooting a zombie romantic comedy. By now, the

Charlotte Honan of *Munjoy Hill* is ready for her West End close-up.

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## METROPOLE

scouting from room to room with an air of satisfaction, surveys my library with our books, hard-bound copies of 28 years of *Portland Magazine*, and my prize Zuber mural showing the Boston panel from *Views of North America*: “This is the office of the most egotistical man in Portland, Maine.”

I gulp. “In the movie, you mean.”

**S**unday Morning, June 22. Shooting begins. 6:18 a.m. I am intent upon hiding the liquor from the film people, not because I’m thinking they’ll steal it but because it looks so weird that I keep this much. I have half of it loaded in the car. But this kid, this *Fast and Furious*-looking kid who’s among the first four people I’ve opened the house to, has somehow found a way, in just two minutes, to go upstairs, find his way down a service corridor, come down our back stairs, and knock over and break a bottle of merlot I’ve put there for just a second. It’s not just a strike, it’s a miracle. Amid jagged glass, a purple pool blooms incriminatingly.

Scott: “Do you have a dust pan?”

Fifty people have now trailed through the building, with walkie talkies and big long steps like they’re walking outdoors.

(Continued on page 106)

talented cast and characters of this film are well known in the Forest City. I hope these diary selections can slip us past the Fourth Wall that separates an audience from the cast, because there’s an exciting creative dimension in between. It’s been a rare opportunity for me to see my house, and even myself, through vastly different eyes.

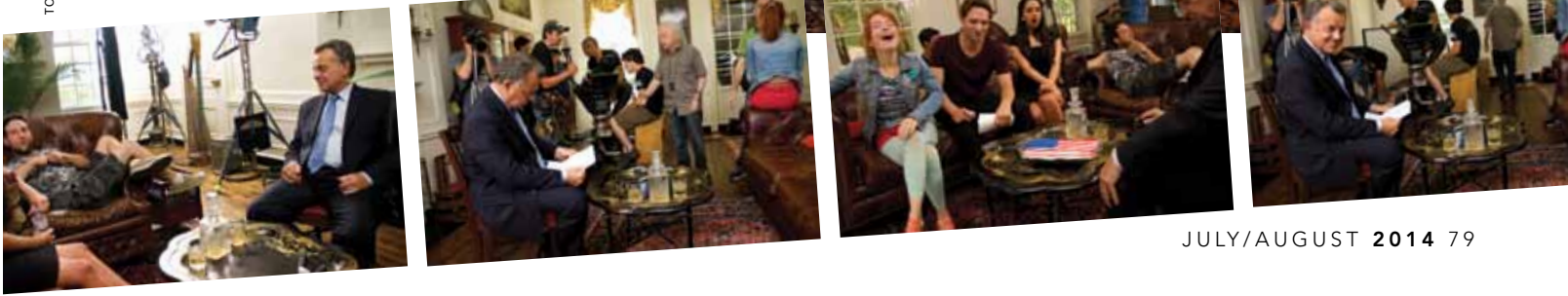
**I**NTERIOR, MANDERLEY, DAY. It’s the Friday before shooting begins at our house at 155 Western Promenade, the 1922 Georgian Revival home my wife and I have been restoring since we bought it in 2008. The house is nicknamed “Manderley” after the mansion in the Hitchcock movie *Rebecca*.

SCOTT TAYLOR, location manager,



Stars in my living room, from left: Maria Thayer (the living Deb), Michael Cassidy, Syd Wilder, Chris Marquette, and Ray Wise—in power-suited character as bigshot Frank Waverly.

TONY COPOLILLO



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Andrew Wyeth (American, 1917–2009) *Young Fisherman and Dory, Study for The Wotwand*, 1944, drybrush on paper, 29 3/4" x 39 1/4", museum purchase, 1954.906 ©Andrew Wyeth

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## METROPOLE

*The Zombie Diaries (continued from page 79)*

Many wear black sweatshirts with hoods and wake-up hair. They're like a road crew, only they're all former National Merit semi-finalists or something. Lots of bandanas and beards unless they're one of the younger, callow guys. So many from everywhere and therefore nowhere. They're walking Indian file, and now they have headsets on, looking around curiously. They're all wedding planners. It's hard not to join the line except this is my house. I know what they're going to see.

Except I don't. What I see is invisible to them, and vice versa.

Now tripods and a million man purses. Some of the people roll up the bottoms of their bluejeans and wear tight black tee shirts. Yellow suitcases. Black suitcases.

Upon seeing our kitchen, a young woman with Tamsyn hair say, "Holy crow."

And I imagine a holy crow, an Apache deity maybe, sweeping in from above D.H. Lawrence's summer retreat in New Mexico. Or something out of Carlos Castaneda.

"Do we know where we are?"

"We'll be doing makeup in here."

"Not too much to do until the art truck arrives. We're waiting on Jeremy, I guess." Jeremy White is the production designer.

"Yes, we're all waiting on Jeremy."

The star room in this mansion, really, is the bathroom. "Is there, a..." is the way it comes up in conversation.

A makeup artist moves some china from the top of a server in our sunroom. "Anything that looks dainty, we'll evacuate." She puts her shiny yellow purse where the creamer and sugar were.

I close my eyes and listen to the Hollywood talk. In California, "Oh, that's great" must mean, "I didn't ask you to speak. Leave my presence."

By 7:03 a.m., I realize the house is way out of control. Speakers move in on big two-tier carts followed by blue tubs and big black camera equipment. Booms. Gaffer stuff. K-tel. Lots of zippers. Duct tape with "Camera" written on it. I get a close look at all the people who are, and aren't, mentioned at the end of the film when the credits are flying across the screen and stragglers are bobbing among the theater seats, looking for dropped wallets and sunglasses.

I hear Miles Davis playing downlow music. Holy crow.

DR. NANCY SARGENT  
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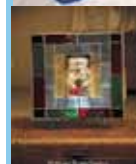
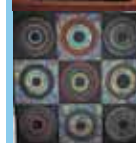
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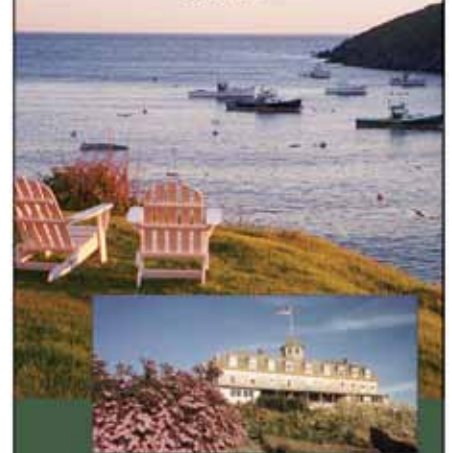
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## METROPOLE

One of these techies is Marc Bartholomew, of Portland. He wears a blue sweatshirt and carries black ghostbuster gear. “I do documentaries. Kyle was looking for local talent. Ben Kahn recommended me.”

**7:12.** I catch a glimpse of two blue director’s chairs set up in Manderley’s solarium.

“Jeremy is here!” Hipster hat, blue Allagash shirt with a red Saison dot on it, glasses. Tall, a beard. He runs the art truck. He should stay in Portland. We have plenty of food trucks now. What we need is art trucks.

**7:06.** The first time I see a crewmember eating something. It’s breakfast, something in a white plastic bowl with a peel-top.

**7:14.** Fast and Furious comes in from the back garden, eating a banana. I later find a banana on my desk. An offering?

**7:15.** I decide to do a walkabout.

“Do we need batteries out there? It’s as bright as shit. Beautiful.”

“I’m just worried people are going to kick us out.”

**7:20.** It’s the first time I hear the word zombie. Because these people aren’t zombies. They’re really actors.

**S**cott asks me to move our RED FIAT from our garage to a position in front of the house. I go out there. A huge old rusty bomber of a Cadillac Coupe de Ville—a zombie car—is parked right in front.

“Here?” I ask Tom Ackerman, the cinematographer. He’s looking at the RED FIAT. “I’ve driven a Fiat 500 before.”

“In Italy? In Naples?”

“No! On the Amalfi coast with my wife. It was white knuckles there, though, too.”

**7:30.** I see Kyle. The eye of the storm. He has time to talk calmly with everybody. He’s not wearing tech gear. He’s Lord Nelson walking the deck. He stops and watches the costumer air-iron Ray Wise’s blue PJs in our butler’s pantry on a rolling hanger. There’s no need to ask whose PJs they are. “They are so lame,” Kyle laughs, watching them get smooth. I don’t tell him I have a pair just like them.

**7:40.** A techie says, “They were expecting me, Kyle.” He holds up one of our plastic Cameron-tartan drink coasters in the sun room. Kyle says, “Cameron clan?”

“How did you get into makeup?” one of the actors asks as he slides into a chair for his zombie makeup.

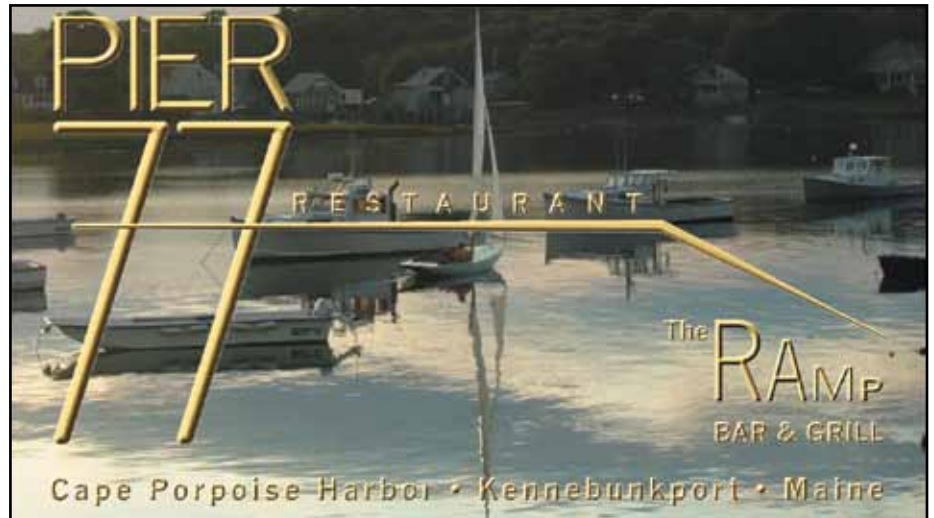
“I watched movies when I was a kid,” Cameron says.

“I have a blue shirt. Should I wear a blue



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## METROPOLE

shirt or a black shirt?"

"There's going to be blood on it. You're infected, not dead."

Another actor, in another chair.

"I'm not having a reaction, am I?"

"Well it didn't get in your eye."

Scott sweeps by. "Oh. So you have a front-row seat to the ghoulishness." I know that's not why he's talking to me. "Um, I forgot to ask you. Do you have a WiFi password we can use?"

**M**ore people flood in. "Zombie extras." "Just have them sit in the garden."

A guy walks in. "Hey, Cameron, do you know where a bathroom is?"

"It's over there."

Then the guy says into his mike, "I know, I know. It's the GFI that keeps tripping."

"Across that hall there," Cameron Dortsch says.

"Cameron's a family name of mine," I tell him. "Those are my valuable plastic coasters."

A person I've seen everywhere is talking on her head set. She walks while she talks, like on the *West Wing*. "Send them to me," she says into her mike. *Who are you?* I hear a tinny voice in her headset ask her. "Kate is me."

Zombies out in the back garden, talking.

A single person is standing in the dark living room, checking a cell phone.

"How many gallons of fake blood?"

"We have 200 gallons of fake blood," Cameron says.

EXTERIOR, front of Manderley, 8:20 a.m. A guy walks up. "Do you have a bucket and a sponge? We need to wash that RED FIAT out front."

Now this is starting to work out! I tell him to look in the basement tool room.

He's wearing a blue shirt with blue jeans, the dreaded Canadian Tuxedo. That's probably why he's been tapped to wash the car. With a headset on. Seriously, there are at least 50 people wearing headsets.

CHAD NICHOLSON, a producer, has sunglasses and a cowboy hat on. Standing on the Prom across the street from the house, he assembles his shooting crew for a huddle:

"We're in this beautiful house. We do not want anybody to rush. We want to keep things as breakless as possible. We have fireworks."

Tom, cinematographer: "We can't underestimate how lucky we are to be in this house. Everything in there you should consider to be absolutely untouchable. We'd



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## METROPOLE



Cast, crew, and friends laugh at the bloopers reel projected at the wrap party July 3 at O'Maine Studios.

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thought of using a house in California like this but didn't dare dream about trying to make that happen. If you need to move something, we'll ask. Everything that's going to move, Jeremy will do it. It's a big house, but it's also very small. For example, the second-floor landing."

"All right. We'll just get [the two lead actors, Maria Thayer and Michael Cassidy, waiting in our center hallway] out of the chairs and out here and we'll shoot a film. We'll be here about a week. We'll be able to stretch things out by shooting exteriors."

Guys are now beside the RED FIAT, covering over the Quirk motors sticker.

Kyle is wearing an Allagash Brewing shirt. He's working by watching others work.

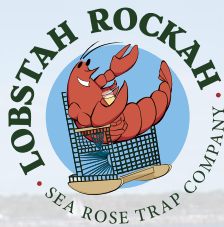
"Kyle, do you want some distant zombies in this shot?" As in, standoffish?

**C**inematographer: "Let's come down with the camera. More, more, more, lovely lovely, lovely. We have an ideal situation here with these trees."

Sharklike, a police car goes by. Joggers just "happen" to go jogging by. Now the former president of Bass Shoes drives a moped by. Is he spying? Other people are walking so deliberately and self-consciously across the front of Manderley you know they hope to be discovered as extras.

I walk back to the garden to chat with zombie hopefuls. "I'm Charlotte Honan," one of them says. "I'm from Munjoy Hill. I'm going to drama school next year. I want to go to California, but my dad's from England, so I'll probably go to England."

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“How did you get hired?”

“I saw shooting in India Street and saw a couple of the guys with cameras, so I just went up to them. They weren’t filming, so they weren’t busy. They brought me over to Michelle. She said, ‘Drop me an email. Send a picture of yourself. We’ll see if we can get you in.’ I had butterflies all day. I didn’t know what to wear, even though she said just casual attire.

“My dad’s from Salisbury. He’s been an actor his whole life. He’s been in many Portland Stage productions. He was the star of *The Foreigner*. That was easily my favorite play at Portland Stage. I’ve performed in many *Christmas Carols* at Portland Stage. I know both Hannah and Nora Daly. Michael Rafkin is like an uncle to me. I just backpacked through Australia last year. I love Portland, but I do want to get out again. I definitely want to travel again, because I’ve been bitten by the travel bug and that makes me interested in acting again because there’s the chance to go to all these different shooting sites. Meanwhile, I work at Cool As A Moose. I’m 19. You have a beautiful home. *Portland Magazine*, oh, it’s good to meet you. My mom reads a lot of that.”

Zombies are in my garden. I snap a candid. I guess, don’t smile.

“37 Apple, Take 2, Mark.” Two people are in the zombie car. The cameras roll. Then Kyle crawls in to talk with them. I walk into 155 Western Promenade and see two of the actors running lines pretty wonderfully. It’s like I’ve walked into the movie. This is way



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## METROPOLE

beyond just a read-through. They're incredibly animated, natural. It's like they're already in the can.

Fast and Furious walks by. His t-shirt says *Property of Cumberland Hall, Maine*. "Do you want some water?" he asks Cameron in makeup. Cameron perks up. "Did they get the energy drink today? I'm not a morning person."



A zombie kicks back and relaxes on my patio.

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In his other life, Cameron works "as a lab assistant in a hospital in California. I'm 30 minutes from Palm Springs, at the Loma Linda medical center. Where they had the baboon transplant?"

Did they base the movie on that? The *Hungry Heart* or *Untamed Heart* or whatever?

"Yes."

**9:55** a.m. They've festooned 155 Western Prom with patriotic banners Scott tells me the zombies are about to come in through the gate.

The heroes are in the bombed-out Cadillac, champagne colored and rusty. "You don't even know if they're in there," she says. "They're in there. Trust me." Meanwhile, behind them, a zombie is lurching toward them across the Prom.

Now Kyle and Tom, the cinematographer, are on the front walk. The movie is coming inside. They're talking about "zombie cutaways." The heroes are still in character, even though they're not shooting film.

**10:15** a.m. Scott materializes. "There's

this beautiful Chinese robe behind the door in the room with the Chinese bed. Would it be all right if Ray Wise wears that in one of the scenes?"

Now a man dressed in green and brown moss, like he's risen from a swamp, stands on the inside of the front gate at 155 Western Prom. The heroes want in. They run some lines with the swamp man. Jeremy shows up with a machine gun. "Fire in the hold." He burps out some rounds from the plastic gun.

The moss man, let's call him Moss Ness, now takes the toy automatic weapon and consults with Jeremy. Moss Man turns the gun and aims toward my neighbor's faux slate roof.

I meet Laura Lienert, the set designer, who has brought bunting from her family to put on the house. It's slightly nostalgic. 'Old school,' they're supposed to connote. "Oh, is this your house?" she asks. "It's such a beautiful house." She's from Annapolis, Maryland, but now she's a Mainer who lives in Brunswick in a John Calvin Stevens house from the 1880s.

**L**ienert cuts flowers from the back garden and takes them to the front of the house, where the zombies are coming, and makes vignettes with our garden furniture. Why didn't we ever think to do that?

The light is so perfect and bright blue it almost bounces against the green lawn and bushes. Such a flawless sky you could cut the light with scissors. Manderley is having a good rose day.

I ask Laura, Scott, and Kyle if they want me to cut the lawn again, thinking about how it might look different if I were to cut it next week, and they don't think it matters. I feel as though I can see the individual blades of grass growing.

"Ray Wise is going to be here in about an hour," Kyle says.

Back in the garden, two zombies, one on one of my lounge chairs, strike up a conversation with me as time takes a holiday between shots.

"Do you think your neighbors here in the West End are bothered by this?" one of them asks. Blood is spurting from his mouth and eyes. One of the scenes involves a honking car, and he seems authentically concerned.

"Believe me, this is just another day on the Western Prom."

One of the zombies is a photographer in his other life. This zombie has paid his

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## METROPOLE

dues. "I take concert photos," Jim Pappacostantine of Woodford Street says. "I worked for Sweet Potato and FACE magazine." He mentions Stephen King. "I used to collect old books. I had a very old one of his, a literary chapbook called Moth. I went to one of his readings. During Q & A, I held the book up. 'Is this one of the earliest things you ever did?'"

"Let me see that," he said. He came down to the audience, took the book, walked back to the lectern, and said, "No. Next question?"

Asked why he's here, the lounge chair zombie says, "I'm Peter Haase, from Waterville. I'm a big fan of *The Walking Dead*."

Beside him is Kyle Warnock, a new Portland resident. "I live near Washington and



The Red Fiat before she was banished from the set.

Oxford, close to the Old Port. I'm really into acting. I love being in productions."

Back out front, I overhear cinematographer Tom say to his wife, "You should see the interior of the house. And check out this view. The air smells so good here."

His wife: "I always come to the pretty locations."

Scott glides over, after I've moved my RED FIAT six times to line up with very precise marks in front of the house. "I'm sorry, Colin, but we've looked at light gauge and taken some measurements and now maybe we're going to use a BLUE VERSA instead."

I see the smug little BLUE VERSA driving down Western Promenade. The bitch, with her superior landing ratio, from out of nowhere. "I'm sorry," Kyle says. "The red just wasn't reading right."

It's *All About Eve* all over again! Instead of RED FIAT? How will I break it to RED FIAT? Holy crow, our little RED FIAT is out of the show!

36 Apple, Take Two, Separate Sticks. Ready, Mark, ACTION [with the BLUE CAR].

The zombie car pulls up behind Stacy's car as the cameras glide and pan from a stainless-steel dolly by J.L. Fisher of Burbank, California, on rails across the street, with a big crowd watching. Stacy's blue car. The shot is a wrap. Chad says, "This was perfect." He points to the house's gate, the house itself, the zombie car, the blue car. "Right in the center. Look at the symmetry. Just perfect."

**12:52 p.m.** Am I blue!

**12:53 p.m.** I'm just saying, the zombie extras have been in full face makeup for two hours. They're starting to look normal to me. Especially when they're checking their cell phones and eating candy bars to keep their energy up. Particularly two ZOMBIE BOYS who are licking the wrappers, waiting.

**12:57 p.m.** During an interlude, cars are allowed to drive past 155 Western Prom. I peer through the tinted glass and see that some of the drivers are wearing zombie makeup though they apparently have nothing no more to do with the show than our hapless RED FIAT.

**1:03 p.m.** Lunch.

**5:40 p.m.** Ray Wise is being heavily guarded by the filmsters. They revere him so much they even chose Wise potato chips for their cast lunch. I think it's because he was in *Twin Peaks*, among so many cult shows. I snap a photo of him near our Chinese bed and feel lucky to get this picture, during a rehearsal. From what little I've seen, there are at least four people who can act in this show, and Wise is one of them. He almost whispers, but the way he does it is fascinating, as long as they can catch it on audio. He has a really off-putting strangeness. He sits so naturally in my guest room in my son's souvenir brought back from Hong Kong.

I remember the first time I ever met Ray Wise, 11 minutes ago. On patrol, I introduce myself to his blank expression, we shake hands, and I say, "It's my house." He says, "Well, it's lovely," as if he's accustomed to being in someone else's house all the time, and in fact, should I really be here?

I run into costumer (she doesn't say *costumier*) Paula Galucci, who is air-drying a second set of PJs. When I ask why, she says, "One set is going to get bloody." ■

Visit [portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2014/7/zombies](http://portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2014/7/zombies) for more.



Director Kyle Rankin instructs cult hero Ray Wise in the Chinese bedroom in the souvenir Chinese robe from Hong Kong..

## WRAP IT UP

Scott Taylor, site coordinator, with the zombie car used in the film.



It's a wrap: Lead actors Maria Thayer and Michael Cassidy smile for the camera with guests.



It wouldn't be a party without zombies. Wrap party with zombie Cadillac at 54 Danforth St.



From left: film editor Tony Capolillo and director Kyle Rankin with a guest.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COLIN SARGENT (2); MEAGHAN MAURICE(3); CHRISTOPHER RICCARDO (3)