

Quiet

on the set

David Ottier and his sound team bring the boom to the entertainment industry

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Talent North writer

The year has just begun, but for the northern-film industry, it looks promising for a busy year. One man, in particular, supports and knows all about the opportunities and growth planned for the north.

David Ottier, founder of MidCoast Productions Inc., is known across the entertainment industry for providing on-set audio to television and film productions, for more than a decade. In 2013, David decided to expand his business and he created MidCoast North Inc.

After travelling the world for several years, David has been able to create a worldwide name for himself, being able to meet with some of the most well-known actors, producers and directors.

Growing up in southern Ontario, David attended Sheridan College,

graduating from electronics engineering, and the highly credited Recording Arts Canada Digital Arts College (RAC). He's been recording and mixing for more than 15 years and has no plans on slowing down.

MidCoast North is based in Greater Sudbury. David recognizes the opportunity that the north has for the industry and has plans to create new initiatives, assist with job growth and is always looking for ways to promote the north.

David and his crew were currently working on the set of a Hallmark movie, which was being filmed in downtown Sudbury. As I sit across the table from David, I can clearly see the passion he has for the north, his business and the team he works with.

"MidCoast North is proud to be in Greater Sudbury to assist with the growing film industry," says David. ■■■➔

“A sound-recordingist is essentially the first person to hear a film and David Ottier is that rare kind of forward-thinking craftsman who comes up with solutions to problems that the producer may not even be aware of until long after they've left the location. A great technician and a true artist, he will always give you what you need to make your project sing!”

— Mike Schultz
Producer/director of Funky Prairie Boy

Photo by **Christos Kalohoridis**



“Buck Productions did not make a single film in 2009 without MidCoast Productions Inc.”

— Joel Burch
Producer, Buck Productions

On set

MidCoast North is responsible for the difficult task of ensuring that the dialogue recorded during filming is clear. Although much of the storytelling and the emotional impact of a script are conveyed through dialogue, most film sets can be challenging for mixers, because there are often unexpected noises to deal with. Sound mixers work on a contract-to-contract basis and the work often involves long periods being away from home, therefore, David brings his furry sidekick, 11-year-old red Siberian husky, Coco, on set every day.

Not only does Coco get to hang out on the set with David, but she has also made a name for herself, appearing in at least a dozen movies. Coco has appeared in *Love of My Life*, this past spring, *Coconut Hero* and *Happily Ever After*. Coco has also been photographed with many famous actors: Carey Elwes from *Princess Bride*, John Hanna from *The Mummy*, and Tom Sizemore. Who doesn't want their picture taken with an adorable dog?

Sound crew

Being part of the sound crew involves boom operators, who assist the production sound mixer on film and television sets. The boom operator is responsible for tracking the talent with the boom microphone, either hand held on a long pole or mounted. Along with assisting the location sound mixer, the boom operator is also responsible for placing wireless lav microphones on the actor's body or clothes.

To capture the dialogue as cleanly as possible, boom operators chase down extraneous location noises, which helps cut back on actors having to go in to post production and rerecord some of their lines.

In a letter from one of David's clients, Joan Carr-Wiggin, co-owner of Paraglyph Pictures Inc., says, "Thanks to David's phenomenal work, we did not need to do any ADR (automated dialogue replace-



ment) on the film for technical reasons.”

This job involves standing for long periods of time, holding the microphone overhead for what can seem like a long time. But if you have the drive to do it, nothing can get in your way.

David talks about one of the men on his team, Darcy Lavallee, who expressed his interest in working for David years ago. He describes Darcy as one of the most hardworking guys he has ever met and continues to prove that he genuinely loves being part of the industry.

“He has cerebral palsy, but you wouldn't know it. People need to know that you can literally do anything if you truly want it,” says David.

While most of his crew is not located in Greater Sudbury, he trains people

that can travel to various sets around the north, depending on the project.

Starting out as a bodyguard in the industry, and now known as the only northern sound mixer for film and television, David is always looking for ways to help others. He understands what it takes to make your way through the challenges you might face in the industry. He says that he worked for free for one year, just to gain the experience.

Growing industry

Greater Sudbury possesses many benefits in aiding the industry, including state-of-the-art facilities for production, such as Northern Ontario Film Studios, accessible funding, support services and unique scenery and architecture to compliment many different productions. David is particularly fond of the amount of lakes Greater Sudbury has, as he is an avid boater since his move to the north more than a year ago.

Greater Sudbury is a halfway point between Toronto and Sault Ste. Marie, another growing spot for the industry. Sault Ste. Marie is growing due to the easy access for industry professionals at the American border.

David says the industry professionals from southern Ontario have started to plant their feet on northern ground, as the projects begin to expand across the major cities and the opportunities appear more frequent.

According to David, the north has welcomed many film and television opportunities and is “Extremely appreciated of the response that we've received welcoming the industry.”

“The industry is growing, and in order to truly make an impact, we need the support of our local community,” says David. ■■■▶



Photos supplied

MidCoast boom operator, Darcy Lavallee, has cerebral palsy and has uses a special rig attached to his chest. David Ottier says Darcy is an inspiration to everyone he meets and is very happy to have him on his team.

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Making the move to Greater Sudbury has allowed him to expand his business across the north, providing more jobs and allowed him to train more people in the field. David does explain some of the difficulties he encounters with limited equipment accessibility.

"We rent all of our walkie talkies from Toronto, which can become expensive, so why not create the ability for that for the north?"

"We need to be focusing on these types of things, so that more films can be made here, more exposure is given to the north and more people can be involved," says David.

Award winning

As an award winner and nominee for various categories, including Best Achievement in Overall Sound, Mid-Coast has had the ability to work with the best producers, directors and actors around the world.

"When I first started out, I made mistakes and I had to own them. I watched where I went wrong and I was able to learn from them.

"I've built my company on being fully accountable for audio recording and

mixing," says David.

He gives the majority of the credit to his team: Alex Van Der Meulen, Huan Nguyen, Alex Turner, Darcy Lavallee and Erik Southey. David trains his team to perfection and has been hired numerous times, due to the professionalism and work ethic behind his team.

"I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to work with the people that I do. My team continues to prove every day why I do what I do. My job doesn't feel like work. It's play time and I love it," says David.

His portfolio consists of clients, which includes SliceTV, National Geographic, LionsGate, Discovery Channel, Food Network, The W Network, Cineflix and much more.

When asked how often he travels, he responds, "I used to travel all the time, it got to a point where I didn't know where I was landing. Now, it's very seldom, as we have a guy dedicated to the travel."

With travelling as far as Rwanda, he speaks about his experience and calling it "life changing." While in Rwanda, in production for the movie *Shake Hands with the Devil*, he sponsored 13 young children, purchasing water tanks

and donating money to orphanages. David goes on to suggest, "Everyone should have the opportunity to travel to Africa, experience their way of life, and to learn to appreciate your life, as a Canadian."

When he's not on set, he's in his boat on the lake enjoying what the north has to offer and, of course, spending time with Coco.

David wants people to understand how important it is to support the industry, to help provide more opportunities for individuals within the community, who would like to pursue a career in film. It takes many people to film a movie, but takes a whole community to support and to keep people coming back to do more.

MidCoast North is currently on the hunt to expand the team, searching for one female and one male boom operator.

"There's so much potential in the north and I want to continue to train people," says David. "I'm looking forward to see what MidCoast North can be."

For more information about the MidCoast brand, visit www.midcoastproductionsinc.com.

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“I have directed five feature films, and my partner and I have produced a total of eight. I can say without reservation that David Ottier is the best sound mixer we have ever worked with.”

— Joan Carr-Wiggin
 Writer/director and co-owner of
 Paragraph Pictures Inc.

