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**Iraq's Ministry of Culture Teams with Local San Diego
Emmy Award Winning Director of Photography, Mario Ortiz**
*Mario Ortiz recently on-location in Kurdistan to Complete the Dramatic Feature Film,
In the Lion's Den*

San Diego, CA (August 27, 2007) – San Diego-based Cinema Verde Productions today announced that co-owner Mario Ortiz was recently on location in Kurdistan, Iraq assisting the Kurdish film community to realize their cinematic abilities using traditional Hollywood photographic and lighting techniques. Ortiz's experience, along with that of Writer/Producer Jesus Roldan, assisted the Kurdish Cinema Department and the film's producers, to custom fabricate grip and lighting equipment to give the Kurdish film a cinematic look that, for the first time, rivals neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and Europe.

In the Lion's Den is a violent drama that explores the lives of adolescents growing up in the troubled city, Mosul, during its most violent period after the reign of Saddam Hussein. Mosul is a city where half of the population is loyal to Hussein, while the other half despises him. ***Two teens, two cultures, two drastically different paths.***

Lace is a young teen who is pressured into taking part in the insurgency to avenge the death of his older brother. A fan of Western music and movies and protective brother to his two sisters, the young Arab is drawn into a resistance cell with other youths sent to fight by their families. He quickly realizes that this is not the battle or the cause he had accepted to fight. Kardo, a young Kurd, is drawn into the ranks of the ING (Iraqi National Guard) with the allure of maintaining a family tradition of Peshmerga fighters who have fought and died to protect their homeland. He is torn between the patriotic ideals of his high ranking ING officer uncle Ashty, and his once highly-respected war hero grandfather Sarbast, who is now an adamant pacifist. Facing two highly opposing ideologies, he chooses to join the armed forces and take the battle to the insurgents. These two paths inevitably collide as the city verges on erupting into all-out civil war when hordes of resistance fighters storm the city after escaping the US assault on Fallujah in November of 2004.

In the Lion's Den is the first feature film collaboration between American film crews and Kurdish film crews. "The Kurdish Film Community is growing and trying to compete internationally, and like all new entities, politics can get in the way of the creative process and this production suffered from a lot of red tape," said Ortiz. The project was promised equipment from the Cinema department, however, internal factions got in the way of getting the much needed gear. This forced the producers to manufacture grip and lighting equipment.

While the equipment was very robust, being fabricated out of steel, it was very heavy and awkward to deal with. Only 60% of the lighting instruments actually worked from the department of cinema so the production crew had to build soft boxes out of shop lights and lumber from various vendors around town. “Utilizing two (occasionally three) 5000w tungsten lights, 2-2000 nook lights, one 1000 nook lights, and one 2500w HMI (with only a 3 foot feeder cable) was all that I had at my disposal. Luckily I packed a few rolls of diffusion (Opal, 250 & grid) at the last minute, which really saved the production. I used almost exclusively the Opal and 250 for all the interiors and some exteriors. Diffusion frames had to be fabricated, of course, and we even made some reflector boards out of emergency solar blankets I originally brought as camera covers,” stated Ortiz. “Steadicam was also utilized on some outdoor scenes to help heighten the suspense during chase sequences or for a foreboding moment climax.”

“The Kurdish people are very warm and friendly to Americans. More than once, the American crew was offered services gratis and discounts because they were from the United States. “I heard it said many times by various Kurds that if it wasn’t for the U.S. Kurdistan would not be enjoying the relatively peaceful state it’s in today,” Mr. Ortiz reported.

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