

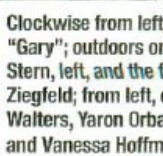
Wet



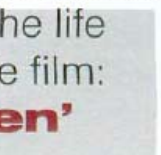
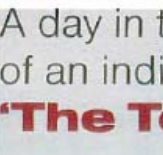
Hot



American



Summer



Clockwise from left, Winona Ryder; "Gary"; outdoors on the set; Jonathan Stern, left, and the film's Michael Ziegfeld; from left, crew members Brett Walters, Yaron Orbach, Christo Morse and Vanessa Hoffman with David Wain

A day in the life of an indie film: 'The Ten'

By John Soltres

The Project: "The Ten"**The Date:** Aug. 3, 2006**The Location:** Harlem Vista Hotel, 75 Macombs Place, New York**New York Wrap Date:** Aug. 25, 2006

It might be the third day of an exhausting heat wave that has the city reeling, but the independent film "The Ten" must continue on schedule. The film, co-written by director David Wain (2001's "Wet Hot American Summer," Comedy Central's "Stella") and Ken Marino (who also produces with Paul Rudd), is a vignette comedy based on the Ten Commandments and co-stars Jessica Alba, Winona Ryder and Adam Brody, among others.

9:15 a.m. Crew members assemble in Union Square to catch a ride on the "crew bus."

10:14 a.m. The van arrives at the Harlem Vista Hotel, near Yankee Stadium. Tribe Road Catering serves breakfast and coffee; caterer Sean McNaughton has been here for hours. "If we had more money, we might have lobsters, but whatever the money we have, we work with," he says.

11:33 a.m. "The Ten's" \$4.7 million budget might seem smaller than expected considering the talent attached to the film, but producer Jonathan Stern believes high-profile names are a necessity for independent films nowadays. The cast, he says, is working for scale, though some actors have back-end profits attached. "We're all investors in this movie, even if we're not investing money," Stern says. "If the movie is successful, we all share in that. It's a more socialist approach."

To finance the film, Stern ballparked the least amount of money the production would need, then asked for a bit more. But major studios resisted the script, and producers settled on independent financiers City Lights Pictures, which was responsible for financing 2004's "A Dirty Shame."

11:51 a.m. From curbside, the Harlem Vista Hotel appears to teem with tenants. Upon closer inspection, just one room is used as the set; another is for production, while still others serve as headquarters for various departments, from makeup and costumes to craft services (watermelon is the food of choice). Production assistant Danielle Stephenson diverts foot traffic on the sidewalk while braving near-100 degree temperatures, using her call sheet as a fan.

12:53 p.m. Scenes being shot today involve the commandment "Thou shalt not steal." The sequence sees Winona Ryder's character, Kelly, who is honeymooning at a sleazy motel near Atlantic City, N.J., take in a ventriloquist act at a cabaret show. "Winona's character immediately falls in love with the dummy," Stern says.

1:41 p.m. Scene changes give location manager Collin Smith a chance for a smoke. He arrived at the set early this morning, but he won't be able to leave until two hours after the final wrap. "It's a duality of purpose in our role," Smith says. "In preproduction, it's all photography, and in production, it's all micromanaging."

2:46 p.m. The press is here: Paparazzi are setting up to grab shots of Ryder on the set. She'll be appearing in Scene 93, listed on the call sheet as "Kelly & Gary the Puppet have sex."

3:55 p.m. Stern and fellow producer Morris S. Levy convene with crew members in a room two doors down from the room set to watch the proceedings on a monitor. They talk about the importance of film festivals for indie movies and their plan to shop "Ten" around during next year's Sundance Film Festival.

Once the film wraps in New York, production will head to Mexico for its final days of filming; Stern says it's more cost-effective, since shooting in the Big Apple — even with the tax rebates — is financially burdensome.

The producers erupt into laughter as Ryder fakes an orgasm with Gary the Puppet. Outside, temperatures rise, sending wavy lines of heat up from the asphalt. ■