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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Not many UTSA technical communication majors can brag about having two straight-to-DVD feature films sitting on shelves in Blockbusters nationwide. But 23-year-old Matt Ramirez can.

Always the movie enthusiast, Ramirez began writing scripts and toying with a video camera in a creative writing and film class his freshman year at Clark High School. Since then Ramirez has written and produced two shorts, has had two feature films bought by Maverick Entertainment, distributed to Blockbusters, NetFlix, Overstock and Best Buys across the country, and is already working on two other projects.

Earlier in Ramirez's cinematic endeavors, he employed the use of more guerilla-style filming.

"For 'Face Down' we took six people to Boerne and shot the entire film in one day," Ramirez said.

Although only a 15-minute short, "Face Down" follows a pair of teens on their trip to South Padre Island where they run into shady dealings and are later involved in a full-out Mexican standoff.

Later, Ramirez worked with Sergio Ramirez, a former associate to produce and direct his first full-length film, "Tortillas, again?"

In "Tortillas, again?" a religious lottery player finally wins only to have his ticket stolen, washed and later cooked.

Ramirez's latest release, "For Amor," tells the tale of a successful businessman and his wife. Try as they might, their marriage remains unfruitful. On one of his trips, the businessman has an unplanned affair that results in a child. Through the many hardships and struggles that arise from the birth of the illegitimate child and later the death of his/her mother, the leading man and his wife learn to forgive and accept that things happen for a reason. The DVD will be available Feb. 13.

It doesn't hurt to have a completely supportive and encouraging father who has backed many of Ramirez' projects with his video production company, Lobo Video Production (LVP).

The mechanism behind LVP is simple; low budget, regional locales and deferred payment—not one cent is made until the film is picked-up by a distributor.

Perhaps the most attention-grab-

bing line of LVP is: "Our philosophy is built on a culture of passion, commitment and creativity. This unique blend has enabled us to develop innovative and leading edge productions. We also produce independent films catered to Latin audiences."

One of the recurring goals in Ramirez's cinematographic career is to finally reach out to the Latino audience, which has long been crying out for movies it can relate to. Tired of seeing Latino actors in the same subservient roles, Ramirez asked himself a series of questions: Why aren't there films with Latinos as the heroes? Why do I constantly see Latinos in the same typecast roles? What can I do about it?

Forget about the Zorros or the Ugly Bettys and of course the stereotypical gardeners or housekeepers being in any of Ramirez's films. What Ramirez hopes to provide his audience with is the uncle Joes, the mas, the pas and ultimately a better role model that Latinos can relate to.

Along with a stronger connection to characters, the viewer can also look forward to experience what Maverick Entertainment calls "Fusion Films," 70 percent English, 30 percent Spanish and a very minimal use of subtitles.

Already in the works for Ramirez is a family film named "The Adventures of Paleta Man," a thriller, "Curse de Oro" and "Coca." Aptly named, "Coca" is an 85-minute action film that illustrates the perfect score: drug-trafficking using tour buses. While it may be in pre-production (the shoot begins Mar. 17), Ramirez plans to shoot the film in Alice, San Antonio, San Diego and Monterrey, Mexico.

Ramirez's talents don't stop at filmmaking. He plays bass guitar for "Scholars & Thieves," a band formed by fellow band-mate J.C. Rodriguez, along with guitar, drums and piano. Ramirez and his father use these talents to create the scores for his films, whether it be in song form or solely instrumental.

With graduation around the corner in May, and already in talks with producers in California, Ramirez's future doesn't seem to be moving far from his roots, at least not figuratively. Although having lived in Alice, Austin, and Greendale, California, Ramirez still cites San Antonio as his hometown.

"San Antonio has helped me develop a sense of where to be in a movie," Ramirez said.