

# Valley Life



**The Click of Castanets**  
A bit of Spain comes to Canoga Park tonight when Flamenco del Futuro, a new flamenco dance troupe, performs at the Madrid Theatre, 21622 Sherman Way, Canoga Park. No children under 6. Tickets are \$9.25-\$27.50. (818) 347-9938.

## Sense of Direction

By SUZIE ST. JOHN  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Jenni Gold of Van Nuys made a film on a shoestring budget two years ago. It was an action-adventure flick about an ex-CIA agent trying to stop terrorists from getting their hands on a shipment of chemical weapons.

Sounds like your typical adventure thriller. Except the independently produced "Ready, Willing & Able" starred an actress who is in a wheelchair and was directed by Gold, 34, who also works from a wheelchair.

Gold, who has a form of muscular dystrophy called spinal muscular atrophy, became interested in directing at age 6 as a participant in the nationally televised Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Assn. Telethon. She considers Lewis a mentor. "I was more interested in what the cameramen were doing than anything else," Gold said. "Participating in the telethons gave me the opportunity to see all sides of production."

She made her first film, "Ten Plagues," with a Super 8 camera in the seventh grade. With her mind and heart set on a career in directing, Gold enrolled in the film program at the University of Central Florida, recently made famous for spawning the creative talent behind "The Blair Witch Project."

Watching her classmates climb the industry ladder through internships in physically demanding jobs, Gold knew she would have to do more than direct to get attention.

"Unfortunately, once people see the chair, that's it," she said. "I knew that if I wanted to get to the point where people would hire me as a director, I would have to write a screenplay first. That way I'm in control and can hire myself to direct."

She directed, wrote and edited two short films, "Panic" and "Now Showing." When she was ready for a full-length film, she consulted her mentors. "They all said, write something really

good and you direct it," Gold said. "So I wrote a Hitchcockian thriller called 'Adrenaline,' and they read it and said, 'It's too good for a low budget, save it for a bigger budget.'"

From there she went on to co-write "Ready, Willing & Able," which was filmed in 26 days in Orlando, Fla., in 1997. Post-production took place at Universal Studios and was completed at the end of last year.

"It was a real challenge to do an action film with no money, but hopefully the conclusion is that if she can do this with a low budget, what can she do with a real budget?" Gold said.

While domestic deals to show "Ready, Willing & Able" on television or video are still in the works, Showcase Entertainment in Woodland Hills recently acquired the international rights and has been marketing it in Europe.



Gold directs on the set of the low-budget "Ready, Willing & Able, which she co-wrote.

"The only thing this movie doesn't have is a bankable star," said David Jackson, president of Showcase Entertainment.

The main character, Samantha Martin, played by Christopher Templeton, starts as an able-bodied CIA agent, but an accident in the line of duty leaves her disabled, forcing her retirement.

Templeton, whose real-life disability was caused by polio, uses a cane in everyday life. She is best known for her 11-year run on the soap opera "The Young and the Restless" and has appeared in guest spots on "Frasier," "Renegade" and "Knots Landing."

"I think it's great that they were seeking a disabled person for this role," said Templeton, 48. "The disability movement's not hot anymore. It's passe. So the jobs aren't as plentiful as they used to be."

Gold and friend Peter Bauer sat down and banged out a screenplay in less than a month.

Once completed, she and co-producer Jeff Maynard, who is also her fiance, submitted the film and the \$103,000 budget to the Director's Guild of America for approval. Under the DGA's Low-Budget Agreement, any film with a budget under a certain dollar amount—which varies depending on the category—must be approved by the union, Maynard said.

Gold realized a lifelong dream when she became a member of the DGA, thanks to the sponsorship of Jerry Lewis and two other DGA members, Walter E. von Huene and Jay Dubin.

She is already planning to shoot "Adrenaline," on a budget of about \$6 million. Jackson said Showcase is working out the details to co-produce it.

"All of my life I've had people tell me things I can't do, and I always say 'Why not?'" Gold said. "It's all about having the talent and the willingness to fight for what you want."

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