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Photo: Jordan Gass-Poore / For North Central News

Aaron Lee Lopez (left) and Brandon Keropian Olmos co-founded Mutt Productions.

California filmmaker **Brandon Keropian Olmos** played songs he composed for the score of San Antonio-based production company Mutt Productions' latest film, "Dani the Ranch Hand," as he explained the technical process of filmmaking.

Olmos has been the sound mixer, supervising sound editor, composer, director, associate producer, cameraman, and editor for a number of the production company's documentaries and feature-length films.

"There are other filmmakers in San Antonio, but they're not doing what we're doing," Olmos said.

A chance encounter in a downtown San Antonio parking lot two years ago led to the collaboration between Mutt Productions' founder Aaron Lee Lopez and Olmos.

Olmos said he initially came to the Alamo City from Los Angeles in 2008 to produce an album for the former Sony Latin-signed musical duo Amor y Pasion.

He began his career in the film industry when he was asked to be a child extra on the 1980's television series "Miami Vice."

That was a special opportunity because Brandon's father, actor Edward James Olmos, co-starred on the popular crime drama. Aside from "Miami Vice," Edward is best known for his work on the "Battlestar Galactica" hit reboot on TV, and on such films as "Blade Runner" and "Zoot Suit."

Brandon has since worked on several Hollywood movies, shorts and television series.

"(Olmos and I) met in the parking lot, but we kind of like started doing all these projects, and they were back-to-back. And then I was like, 'We should just shoot a movie down here,'" Lopez said of his meeting Brandon.

"I wanted to see if we could pull it off with the people here and the talent."

Lopez, a San Antonio native, has had success working as a production assistant, editor, producer and stunt assistant on some of Hollywood's biggest movies such as “**John Carter**,” “Inception” “The Hangover” and “Grindhouse,” and television series such as “Parenthood.”

In 2004, Lopez, a **Texas State University** alumnus, fulfilled his childhood dream of starting a production company.

He said a childhood joke was the impetus behind the production company's name. With blonde hair and light skin, Lopez was called a “mutt” by friends and family members.

Mutt Productions has since gone on to edit and produce television commercials and shows; live concerts, Internet and music videos; animations, documentaries and short and feature-length films.

The full-service production and post-production company recently expanded its San Antonio facilities to help grow and advance the local film industry in Texas.

“Our goal is to bring the projects here, so we can employ people here and teach all the guys,” Lopez said.

In an effort to engage up-and-coming local filmmakers, the production company created a mentoring program in 2010.

San **Antonio College** alumnus **Brian Douglas** began visiting the Mutt Productions office that year.

Douglas said he became a volunteer production assistant on the company's latest feature-length film, "The Return of Johnny V."

Douglas, Mutt Productions chief editor, said he helped on many aspects of the action/comedy, about a burnt out ex-police officer named **Johnny Valenzuela**, whose insatiable taste for revenge brings him face-to-face with his arch nemesis, "The Mayor."

"One of the biggest reasons I think Aaron kinda took a shine to me, and wanted to teach me more and bring me into Mutt Productions, is that I brought in this blowtorch," Douglas recalled.

"They originally had a little Coleman blowtorch they were going to use for a scene and I brought in this big one. From then on, he kind of looked at me like, 'Oh, this guy's kind of cool.'"

"The Return of Johnny V" was filmed entirely in San Antonio. Shooting locations include the River Walk nightclub The Kremlin and the recently renovated Hays Street bridge, the setting for the film's shoot-out finale.

Many of the characters in Mutt Productions' 2009 horror/drama "Curse of the Lechusa" return in the company's latest low-budget Texas grindhouse creation.

Actor **Paul Matthew Lopez**, Aaron Lee Lopez's brother and high-wire performer for the Caesar's Palace show "Absinthe" in Las Vegas, reprises his role as "Johnny V."

San Antonio native **Dana De La Garza** reprises her role as "Angel," a small-town woman who "packs some mean heat," and local actor **David Rodriguez** reprises his role as **Agent Lee**, a corrupt South Texas cop involved in narcotic trafficking.

Lopez said he created the story of Johnny V as a child and considered the character to be his alter ego.

The forename Johnny came from the antagonist in his favorite movie "The **Karate Kid**," and Valenzuela came from his mother's maiden name.

Olmos, "The Return of Johnny V" sound editor and mixer, said the movie was, in many ways, a film experiment.

"We're a small group of professionals transcending the San Antonio film consciousness," he said. "At the same time, we're hoping to uplift the San Antonio film community so we can make bigger-and-better movies and keep on working. That's the whole idea."

“The Return of Johnny V” premiered last December to two sold-out screenings at the **Josephine Theatre**.

Olmos said the film is currently seeking a distributor.

Douglas said his work on “The Return of Johnny V” has led to a filmmaking career.

Lopez said he and Olmos asked Douglas to work with them as a second assistant director on the production of **Woody Allen**'s nephew's indie film in Los Angeles.

Three days after they returned to San Antonio, Mutt Productions started work on Douglas' first feature film, “Dani the Ranch Hand,” about one woman's life after her escape from the **Branch Davidian** cult in Waco.

The movie is scheduled to premiere July 21 at the Josephine Theatre.

Two years and six movies later, Mutt Productions continues to produce Texas-themed independent flicks.

Olmos said he and Lopez are working to produce a remake of the 1980's made-for-television movie “300 Miles for Stephanie” and hope to produce a third installment in the “Johnny V” Saga.

“Aaron and I are filmmakers. We wear a variety of different hats. We're really lucky, since we're out here in Texas, and we're out here in our own little surroundings, our own little company; what we're able to do is something that not many people can do,” Olmos said.

“We live in these offices every day, on the weekends, on holidays. We're always working.”

Visit www.muttproductions.com for more information.

Jordan Gass-Poore' is a Seguin-based freelance writer.

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