



Apart from a readily available and highly effective vaccine what the world in lockdown craves most right now is distraction. We wish to be removed from reality and transported to a place without care in a way not experienced since the Great Depression. As it turns out, the perfect prescription for pandemic escapism was filled right here in Beaufort and is currently being administered at will, often in multiple doses, via your preferred method of Video on Demand.

Stars Fell On Alabama hit half a dozen of the top VOD platforms on Friday, January 8th like the *Crimson Tide* hit the Irish a week earlier. Let's just say it was a big weekend for 'Bama. The low budget indie rom-com crushed the competition much like, well, the *Tide* crushed the hopes and dreams of Buckeye fans the following Monday night. The film is directed by VW Scheich and executive produced by his wife and Rareform Pictures partner, Uyen Le.

Although set in Alabama, the bulk of the film was shot in and around Beaufort during two frenzied weeks in November, 2019. Co-produced through the Beaufort Film Society, it's the first

feature film to shoot in Beaufort in two decades. But the real story dates back to the 2013 BIFF when VW and Uyen began a tradition of showing up and winning awards. This was followed in due course with the pair relocating to Beaufort from L.A. where they spent two years trying to fund and film the original comedy *Basement Bob*. Sadly, Bob didn't make it (yet), but the idea of shooting a movie in Beaufort was firmly rooted and when the opportunity for 'Bama happened, the stars finally aligned.

A few days after the socially distanced, drive-in premier of SFOA in Los Angeles, they are back home in Atlanta already working on *The Next Thing*.

Mark Shaffer: So, you get back from L.A., the film hits VOD on that Friday and it's burning up the charts.

VW: We're trading calls and texts with everyone, "Hey we're 24!"

Uyen: And then it's at 19, and we're like "that's awesome! We're 19! And then it jumped to 9...

VW: iTunes is probably the platform that's easiest to track and I think we're at number 6 there, which for a little indie like this to be up there with [blockbusters] like *Mulan*, wow. We're up there with *The Croods!*

Uyen: And *Tenet*. *Tenet* is number one.

VW: That's crazy.

MS: Not to belittle the current state of affairs, but I think timing is everything and this film checks a lot of boxes.

VW: You know, we're on the plane and Uyen's reading about all these terrible things and I'm getting updates on how well the movie's doing. So being number one in the romance category on iTunes is pretty great.

MS: Opening weekend was big for 'Bama all the way 'round.

(Both laugh)

VW: You know, I think the team must've watched the movie and gotten so excited they . . .

Uyen: Just went off!

VW: Strong hearts, great movie. Can't lose.

MS: Even though it's got Alabama in the title, you may have made the best tourism film the Lowcountry's seen since "Gump."

VW: Once they land in fictional Alabama you could play that on a loop in the Welcome Center at the Arsenal. We lived there with you and everyone else and we discovered these beautiful places and I think we shot them all.

Uyen: A friend asked me about the scene where they're all talking to the lead in L.A. She wanted to know if that was a real bar. It's the Old Bull Tavern. I said, "It sure is. We used to live right behind it." All those spots that we know and grew to love, we wanted the audience to see them and love them, too."

Stars Fell on Alabama is available On Demand. Uyen and VW are currently developing a "Southern horror thriller."