

Nation

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Film-maker carves out a solid career from a land of illusion



**In the mecca of overnight success, Nabil Mechi realized his dream would only be achieved with perseverance, writes Nehme Abouzeid
DS 10/06/00**

At his comfortable offices in Santa Monica, California, just steps from a beach, he generally works alone and in silence, poised in front of a machine that whittles down hours of expensive footage into usable form.

After 15 years in the entertainment industry, Mechi's hard work is finally paying off. In a city where everyone looks like an overnight success, he has built a reputation as a top-notch editor based on years of quality work. "Nabil is a true professional who knows how to tell a story," said director Paul Boyd. "I trust him enough to give him the high-budget jobs. Boyd recently used Mechi's editing skills on Sting's Desert Rose video.

After four years at Cal State, Mechi won a scholarship to study film-making at the California Institute of the Arts

In 1990, he got a straightforward two-week assignment as a cinematographer on a movie shoot in New Orleans, Louisiana. The film, titled Maggie May, ended up winning the 1993 Kodak Prix de Tournage at the Avignon Film Festival. His two-week stay in New Orleans turned into four years, during which time Mechi cast himself as an independent film-maker in the city.

In New Orleans, he directed documentaries on topics as diverse as gospel music, drug use in the housing projects, and jazz musicians. His portrait of the celebrated local painter Rockmore earned him great exposure in the city. "New Orleans was the perfect place for me to learn and grow as a film-maker," Mechi remarks.

In 1994, he returned to Los Angeles with renewed confidence and a more substantial body of work.

With business finally coming his way, he opened Murex Films with partner Valentina Ganeva as a post-production firm.

Murex's first project was to edit a documentary on rock group the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Success on that job led to other high-profile assignments, such as the position of chief editor on sultry Toni Braxton's video, *You're Making Me High*, which had a budget of \$1 million. Since then, music videos have made up the bulk of Mechi's workload. He has edited nearly 200 of them, from artists such as Bryan Adams and Smashmouth to The Backstreet Boys and Babyface. Roman Coppola, the son of famed director Francis Ford Coppola, has worked with Mechi on a number of those projects. "Nabil is a very talented editor," Coppola said. "He's persistent and always willing to revise an edit until it's perfect."

Raphael Smadja, a director of photography and a former classmate at Cal Arts, feels Mechi has all the tools in his arsenal. "He has the great eye of a director of photography, the pace and rhythm of an editor, and the worldly perspective a director needs," Smadja said.

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