

The pull of Apulia

Paul Haggis fell under the spell of Italy's Apulia region, where he shot part of *Third Person*. And the region's incentives are enticing more shoots soon, **Melanie Goodfellow** reports

What does the gritty, industrial port of Taranto in the southern Italian region of Apulia have in common with New York, Paris and Rome? It is one of the locations in Paul Haggis's exploration of love, *Third Person*, which premieres in Toronto this week.

A city of contrasts, Taranto is home to an infamous, smoke-belching steel mill as well as a picturesque old town made-up of a maze of narrow alleys leading down to the sea.

"I was looking for a part of Italy that had not been overexposed in film and I wanted somewhere that was not infested with tourists — and Taranto was perfect," explains Haggis.

He did not hit upon the city by chance. His visit to the region was masterminded by the Apulia Film Commission, a regional body set up in 2007 to entice audiovisual companies to the area through a combination of facilities, financial incentives and script and project development programmes.

"We had heard that Paul Haggis was in Italy



'I completely fell for the region on my scouting trip'

Paul Haggis,
film-maker

scouting for a port location so we invited him to Apulia to take a look... one of our incentives is three nights' board for three people on scouting trips," explains the commission's CEO, Silvio Maselli.

"I had never been to Apulia before but I completely fell for the region on my scouting trip," says Haggis. "I really loved the genuine and generous nature of the people of Taranto, and we worked with a lot of them during shooting. They really took care of me."

Beyond the region's warm welcome and authentic feel, Apulia Film Commission also put some \$131,700 (€100,000) from its International Film Fund and Hospitality Fund into the film, produced by Belgian finance and production company Corsan and Haggis and Michael Nozik's Hwy61.

Launched in March 2012, the \$659,000 (€500,000) International Film Fund is reserved for foreign production companies working with minority Italian partners. Through the fund, the

commission reimburses 15% of the production costs incurred in Apulia.

The Hospitality Fund covers accommodation, catering and transport costs in the region up to a maximum of \$131,700 (€100,000) per feature film.

"Non-Italian producers are also eligible for Italy's national 25% tax credit and exemption from VAT," says Maselli. "A production can save as much as 61% of the costs incurred in Apulia."

Visiting productions are also offered the use of two 'cinehubs' in Apulia's capital of Bari and the southern city of Lecce, which feature office space, screening rooms and some post-production facilities.

Maselli hopes Haggis's decision to shoot *Third Person* in the region will encourage other international productions to follow suit — discussions for several films are underway.

"I expect things to firm up between Toronto and Berlin... people tend to scout in the winter and shoot in the summer," Maselli says.

In the meantime, Max Giwa and Dania Pasquini's musical *Walking On Sunshine* is due to shoot in Lecce and along nearby coastline this autumn, Maselli reveals.

And who knows, perhaps Haggis will return to the region one day. "I would love to go back soon, especially because I didn't get to see a lot of the other beautiful parts of Apulia that I heard about."



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