

THE TENNESSEAN

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Mini-movies take off as marketing tool for luxury homes

By Bill Lewis
THE TENNESSEAN

Many Internet videos marketing homes for sale feature music playing in the background, but you know you're in Nashville when the song selling the house is a Top 40 hit being performed live by the star who wrote it.

The song is "Amie," a soft rock hit from the 1970s. The singer is Craig Fuller, who wrote it and performed with the group Pure Prairie League. The house is at 4106 Sneed Road in Nashville.

The video is one of 50 mini-movies produced in the past couple of years by Nashville-based Film House to market luxury homes from Maine to Honolulu. Twelve of those homes are in Nashville. The movies, typically several minutes long, feature original scripts, professional actors and aerial cinematography.

"It's something different that no one has seen before," said Curt Hahn, Film House's founder and CEO.

Several of the mini-movies feature original songs by Nashville songwriter Michael Shoup.

Last month Hahn received the annual Nashy Award — the local equivalent of a Grammy — for promoting the growth of Nashville's film and television community. Last year's winner was Mayor Karl Dean, who was recognized for making sure the television show "Nashville" continues to be filmed on location in the city.

Hahn believes mini-movies are transforming the way million dollar homes are marketed.

"Every seven-figure listing out there is a candidate. There are 500 in Middle Tennessee alone, and we get calls from the south of France," he said.

Bird's-eye view

Scripts, plot lines and original music aren't the only ways the mini-movies are helping to change the way homes are marketed. So is their use of unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as drones.

When nationally renowned Realtor Jack Cotton commissioned a mini-movie to market a house on a 10-acre private island on Cape Cod, the crew used drone technology to get aerial views of the property. The movie ends with



4106 Sneed Road Nashville TN 37215

a drone shot of actors walking along a dock toward a yacht.

"The whole idea of the video, the mini-movie, is to tell the story of the property. The bar for real estate videos has been raised," said Cotton.

The movie cost almost \$20,000 to shoot, but he believes the result was worth it. The home had been on the market for about a year. After the movie hit the Internet, the house sold for \$6.2 million.

"It makes people watch. If you can get people talking about it, that's what you want," said Courtney.

The house sold soon after the movie was made, said Hahn.

"What happens with the movie is all of a sudden there is a buzz, interest," he said.

Keith Merrill, a Realtor with Worth Properties who helped come up with the idea for the mini-movies, said the goal is to create an emotional

connection with a home.

"The story line, the music, the actors, it's all depending on the house," he said.

Mini-movies are transforming the way high-end homes are marketed. Hahn believes commercial properties are next.

The first mini-movie for a commercial listing was for Athena Day Spa in Brentwood. The 15,000-square-foot building, with an indoor pool, sauna,

steam room and exercise rooms, had been on the market for years.

In the mini-movie, actors portraying L.A. television producers are looking for a location to film a reality show combining "The Biggest Loser" and "Total Makeover." Naturally, they agree Athena is the perfect spot.

Within 40 days of the mini-movie's release, owner Michael Carter had two purchase offers and one lease offer for his building.

"I felt like it was a matter of visibility," said Carter. "We needed to get the building in front of the right prospects, not just locally, but globally. So when I discovered Film House's mini-movies, I immediately thought, 'Aha, this is it!'"



Actors portray a family reunion in the mini-movie Film House shot for this home in Telluride, Colo. After languishing on the market for years, it sold for \$6.4 million within months of the mini-movie going online. (Photo: Film House)

Building a buzz

A combination of acting and aerial cinematography helped sell a luxury home on Nashville's Belle Meade Boulevard. The home had been on the market for several years but had not attracted the right offer. The problem was the location near the entrance to Percy Warner Park. Potential buyers worried about traffic.

Aerial views showed how private and quiet the location is, said Richard Courtney, a Realtor with Christianson Patterson Courtney. The camera follows a couple bicycling through the park and turning into the driveway. A group of actors then has a birthday party around the pool.