

Shadow Company - The Province July 10th 2006

Cover of Entertainment section (story inside)



In good Company

Legends of the Fall director Edward Zwick (left) is a fan of director Nick Bicanic's (right) Vancouver-produced documentary *Shadow Company*

AT THE MOVIES B4

The Province **THE DISP[®]** Esther (a.k.a. Madonna) may cut ties with Kabbalah **B5**

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AT THE MOVIES B4

PIRATES LOOTS THE BOX OFFICE!



CARIBBEAN TREASURE:
Dead Man's Chest breaks three records as it sets sail with a \$132-million US opening weekend

AT THE MOVIES B3

FIND IT

E-List Today	B2
Movie Showtimes	B5
TV Listings	B6-7
Live It!	B9
Comics	B10-11
Astrology	B11
Coffee Break	B12

Sharing a Vision

War in Iran has shaped the outlooks of brothers Sepehr and Soheil, who merge Iranian modes with Western pop-rock in the band Blurred Vision

MUSIC B2



Rock the boat

Any sport that involves paddling—from canoeing to rowing to kayaking, provides a good all-over workout. But beginners should start small

FITNESS B9



Local doc the talk of Capitol Hill

DICAPRIO, ZWICK ARE FANS, TOO: Shadow Company looks at soldiers for hire

BY RAINA DELISLE
STAFF REPORTER



James Ashcroft (left), who left a successful career as a lawyer to become a soldier for hire, is among the men and women featured in the doc *Shadow Company*. Ashcroft's real name and face have been altered for security reasons.

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(The highlighted typo is supposed to read 70,000)

A Vancouver-produced documentary about the impact of "soldiers-for-hire" on today's battlefields is turning heads in Hollywood and on Capitol Hill.

Shadow Company has won praise from members of the U.S. Congress, human-rights activists, award-winning filmmakers and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Director Edward Zwick, who is best known for *Legends of the Fall*, called *Shadow Company* "one of the best documentaries I've ever seen."

"This is the first time I have ever seen such a complicated issue articulated so well," said Zwick.

Director Nick Bicanic was inspired to explore the subject of privately contracted soldiers after his friend joined the ranks.

"No other film has touched the subject of modern-day mercenaries," said Bicanic, 32. "I wanted to find out who these guys are, what they do and why and in the process educate and entertain people."

Zwick is working on a feature about a South African mercenary played by DiCaprio — *The Blood Diamond* — and asked Bicanic for input on the script.

"Zwick is the crème-de-la-crème of the film industry and he was very responsive to my suggestions," said Bicanic, who visited Zwick and DiCaprio on set in Maputo, Mozambique, in April.

Bicanic said the response to the film is vindicating. He pitched the idea to CBC, but was turned down.

Bicanic and co-director Jason Bourque went ahead with the project without financing and spent a year interviewing the major players in Iraq, Sierra Leon, Britain and the U.S.

There are more than **700,000** mercenaries in Iraq alone — according to Robert Young Pelton's upcoming book, *Licensed To Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror to Talk* — but the filmmakers had a tough time getting any to talk. With a promise of a fair portrayal, a few were persuaded.

"People think mercenaries are maniacs with knives in their teeth who kill babies," Bicanic said. "We turn those stereotypes upside-down."

"The core strength of the film is that it's balanced. It does not glamorize mercenaries, nor does it smear them."

Shadow Company was edited in Bicanic's Vancouver living room over six months and completed in January.

The film made its Canadian premiere at Toronto's Hot Docs festival in May. Last month, it was screened and discussed twice on Capitol Hill. Amnesty International has also expressed interest in using *Shadow Company* as an educational resource.

Shadow Company will be released on DVD on Aug. 15. It can be pre-ordered online at www.shadowcompany.com.

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