

Why this Hollywood vet ditched LA for NY to launch her own production company

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The "Hollywood East" movement isn't exclusive to New York City's five boroughs.

Over in Saratoga Springs, filmmaker and Skidmore College screenwriting professor Nicole Coady has launched a new production company called Trident Fantasy Films.

Coady, whose film career spans more than 25 years, has had screenplays produced by big name companies, including New Line Cinema (one of the many properties now owned by AT&T) and 20th Century Fox (NASDAQ: FOX).



COURTESY OF TRIDENT FANTASY FILMS

Nicole Coady, co-founder of Trident Fantasy Films and creator of "The Adventures of Snow White & Rose Red."

Fed up with the "Hollywood boys club," she decided to go independent and — with the help of fellow co-creators, Katie Spass and Andrew Balog — Trident Fantasy Films was born.

We recently caught up with Coady to discuss the company's new Amazon Prime show "The Adventures of Snow White & Rose Red," NYC vs. LA culture, and what advice she has for New York's up-and-coming filmmakers.

Why start a production company on the East Coast as opposed to the West Coast?

We're New Yorkers and we love the East Coast. This is home. Our families are also very important to us, so we need to be where our children are. We're not following the traditional model you see in Los Angeles, where you basically work yourself to death and never have time for home or family. For us things are more organic.

"The Adventures of Snow White & Rose Red" involved all our various family members in different capacities and we were all home at a reasonable hour, even when we were filming. Moms In Film, which I am a member of, advocates for French Hours — the hours you're allowed to shoot in France when making a film. We followed those guidelines when we filmed the show. Four out of five of the producers on the show are women, and three of us are moms with young children. While filming, we worked hard, but we kept the shooting hours much more reasonable than that of a Hollywood production and all the kids went home to their own beds at night. Family is really important to all of us and we took that into consideration when we planned our production schedule.

Where do you film in New York and how does it differ from LA?

We have some incredible locations to film here in New York. In Los Angeles we'd have to pay an enormous amount to build fairy tale forest sets on big sound stages, which is costly, and doesn't have the same look. Here we walk five minutes into the woods and we've got a gorgeous location for our show. I really cannot talk enough about my level of gratitude to Saratoga Springs, where we filmed, and the surrounding areas, and the way the people here have embraced this show.

We literally could not have made "Snow & Rose" without people opening their properties for us to film in. Also, Skidmore College gave us a free production office

and allowed us to film in their beautiful gardens, while the National Museum of Dance let us do fundraising screenings in their wonderful theater. The list really goes on and on! We are definitely here to stay.

New York is really becoming the second Hollywood. So much production is happening here and there is amazing talent. New York also has crazy tax incentives which has film makers flocking to our state.

How did fairy tales inspire you?

I have always loved fairy tales. My mother read them to me every night as a child and I had a few big, beautiful fairy tale books that I remember sitting with and just looking at all the wonderful pictures for hours. When I was about 4 or 5 years old, I had a friend who also loved fairy tales and we used to play a pretend game, where I was Snow White and she was Rose Red. We had a great time!

Later, at Vassar College, I took a class in fairy tale literature that changed my life. It gave me an understanding of the depth of these ancient tales. I learned about their mythological roots, the meaning of many of the prevalent symbols and what they meant to psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and how they worked on our unconscious minds. It was fascinating! Working with stories on this level can be wonderfully healing, inspiring and a great way to learn how to overcome challenges in the real world - all just through experiencing the stories and symbols.

At what point did you decide that the timing was right to launch your own production company?

Flash forward to me becoming a mother. I chose to leave my screenwriting career in Hollywood and moved to upstate New York to be a stay at home mom to my little girl. One of the great gifts of doing that was I had a lot of time to read the fairy tales I loved so much to her, and we also discovered new ones together. My appreciation for these tales only increased. When my daughter got older, I got a major itch to jump back into the world of TV and film. I literally have to create stories, or I go a little nuts, and I was excited about the idea of producing and directing my stories. At Vassar I had been a film major and had the training to direct, but even though I did well as a screenwriter in Hollywood, I never got the opportunity to direct my own work. Now, with my passion for fairy tales reignited, and living in beautiful upstate New York,

which has an abundance of magical forest, lakes and wild gardens, I began to see that I could really make a show like "Snow & Rose" happen!

At this time, I met Andrew and Katie. We were all serving on the board of The Saratoga Springs International Film Festival and we really hit it off. Andrew understood distribution and he and Katie had been involved in a lot of gorilla filmmaking and I had all my Hollywood experience to bring to the table. So we formed our production company, Trident Fantasy Films together. I pitched them the idea for "Snow & Rose" and they loved it. They were on the brink of getting married and starting their own little family, and so the idea of creating a show for children really appealed to them too.

What's different about starting a film company now as opposed to when you were first starting out?

A big thing about the timing for launching the company was that technology and distribution models have changed so much. Twenty years ago we didn't have great digital cameras, laptop editing systems and so many platforms for distribution. The model has changed dramatically in the favor of the upstart production company. You don't need millions of dollars to produce a TV show or film anymore. Although it certainly helps to have money.

What kind of content is Trident Fantasy Films looking to produce?

Currently we are producing our own stories and create content internally. Andrew and I are both writer-directors, so we have plenty of ideas between the two of us, and Katie has a wonderfully creative mind as well and is also getting into the storytelling. All three of us are fantasy geeks, so that's definitely the type of content you'll see coming from us.

Any immediate and future plans?

Right now we're putting all our energy into "Snow & Rose" to fully maximize the revenue stream from that. We've got a book line and video game in the works, a feature film version of the show coming out internationally and, of course, there's always season two of the show. Having said that, we do have some exciting projects in development as well. We're a small company right now so we're trying to do one

thing at time before we move onto the next thing. We definitely want to work on franchise projects — projects we can exploit in many different kinds of media and also merchandise.

What were some of the lessons you learned in your career that you can bestow on aspiring screenwriters and directors?

Don't wait for anyone else to green light you! Learn as much as you can about business and finance, because at the end of the day, you may have to produce your own work, at least initially, if you want to see it get made. Also, if you care about having creative control, you'll probably need to be a producer on your own project. That was one of the big motivators for me — having creative control. For screenwriters, definitely read as many scripts as you can get your hands on. Working as a reader at Tristar in my early years really improved my writing skills. Finally, get out there and meet people and be nice to everyone. You never know who you may end up working with, so it helps to be on good terms with other people in the industry.

Anthony Noto

Reporter

New York Business Journal

