

# COMMUNITY

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Raton's the star as TV crew spends day filming

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RATON — On his 25th birthday, Michael Newman got a makeover. It was nothing new: In his travels around the state hosting the program "New Mexico True Television," Newman says he's experienced plenty of makeovers. But in his 25 years, this was the first time he'd worn a cowboy hat and cowboy boots, and it was his first time in Raton.

Sponsored in part by the New Mexico Tourism Department, the television show travels throughout New Mexico to showcase the state's alluring places and people, giving viewers reasons to leave home and go exploring. The Raton segment, scheduled to air on a mid-summer Sunday morning, is built around a November 2012 New Mexico Magazine feature, titled "The Heart of Raton."

Producer/director Melinda Frame assembled the crew for CliffDweller Digital from her home base in Albuquerque. After

Frame hired documentary filmmaker Reinhard Lorenz, a German transplant to New Mexico, and on-camera host Newman, an actor who moved to Albuquerque five years ago from his home state of Florida.

The close-knit threesome — they've traveled thousands of miles together in a big SUV — has filmed the four corners of the state and much that lies between. Frame does the advance work, lining up locations and interviews, often using New Mexico Magazine features to guide her. She and Lorenz collaborate to construct a story with their twin cameras, with Newman on standby, ready to walk into any frame, a surrogate for the TV viewer, as he explores attractions and chats with people along the way.

In Raton, Newman got his afternoon cowboy makeover from Sandy Solano at Solano's Boot & Western Wear in downtown. He'd never been this close to western wear, much less worn any. They started with a hat, which Solano helped him select, then she steamed, sized and shaped it for him. Next she fitted Newman in a pair of blue knee-high boots, explaining that working cowboys might choose such high boots for riding through tall, rough brush.

Newman was amazed how easily the boots went on, but then he couldn't get them off by himself. That's when Solano taught him how to use a bootjack, then demonstrated boot pulls. Newman laughed, then said, "Who knew!"

The makeover continued with a white pearl-snap western shirt and a beaded belt. Newman emerged from the dressing room with a huge smile for the cameras, though he allowed afterward that he would face laughter if he dressed this way at home in Albuquerque.

He had started the morning early at Raton Depot in a two-tone North Face windbreaker and Nike running shoes. The crew filmed along historic First Street, then interviewed Raton Arts & Humanities director Brenda Ferri as the group toured the new May Flowers show at Old Pass Gallery, housed in the original Wells Fargo Express building at the depot. After visits to several antique shops along First Street and an extended exploration of the vast Raton Museum downtown, they turned south for food.

At the Sands Restaurant, Lorenz fixed his camera on a green-chile enchilada plate as it traveled from cook to waitress to customer, and Frame filmed the colorful details of the restaurant's interior. Then the group rushed out to arrive a bit late at the converted 1947 service station, The Station, where owner Frank Ferri had gathered dozens of his buddies, along with their wives and, in many cases, their restored classic cars, many of which dated back as far as the station itself.

Ferri bought and renovated The Station a few years ago. Now it's his playhouse where he works on his 1942 Chevy, his 1947 Hudson and the 1968 Charger he restored for his daughter, Brenda. The cars compete for space with extensive Elvis Presley and Coca-Cola collections. "It's an old man's hangout," he says. "Guys bring their cars and we barbeque." And that's what they did for the film crew.

At The Station, the film crew lost track of time, setting their cameras beside their Coke bottles to enjoy old cars, old characters, grilled meats and a classic Raton with Johnson Mesa



Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Clockwise from above, "New Mexico True Television" host Michael Newman considers the options in choosing his first-ever cowboy hat as Sandy Solano teaches him the fine points at Solano's Boot & Western Wear in Raton last week. Newman interviews Frank Ferri at his converted service station, The Station, where Ferri had rallied dozens of his friends and their classic cars for the occasion. Filming are Melinda Frame and Reinhard Lorenz. Andy Solano started this boot shop in downtown Raton 58 years ago. Here he tells "New Mexico True Television" that he hopes to work in his shop 10 more years. Raton Arts & Humanities Council director Brenda Ferri gives an Old Pass Gallery tour to the television host and camera operators Frame and Lorenz. Newman says this is just the most recent of many makeovers he's experienced as the film crew has explored New Mexico. Tools of the trade and some liquid refreshments help get the job done. The tour will be part of a "New Mexico True Television" episode that will air in mid-summer.



prolonged filmmaking stints in Chicago and New York, the Albuquerque native returned home and tried teaching. One year in the classroom convinced her that she's a filmmaker, not a teacher. Thrilled to produce a series exploring her home state,

as backdrop. As a cake was sliced, Frame revealed that it was Newman's birthday, so everyone burst into a round of "Happy Birthday."

Solano's was the last stop of the day, and Newman was still in his western makeover duds when the crew stepped down to visit Andy Solano at his boot shop in back. Since founding the business as a simple repair shop in 1956, Andy has worked on all things leather in this same shop while his wife, and then his children, grew a vast western-

wear store around him. Frame and her crew recognized that — along with Frank Ferri and his world — Andy Solano and his leather shop would be a star of this episode of "New Mexico True Television." They filmed him working on old machines. On camera, he told Newman that he hoped to have another 10 years working in his shop. Frame wished there was a way to convey on film the all-encompassing smell of leather. They filmed Andy until the end of their day.



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