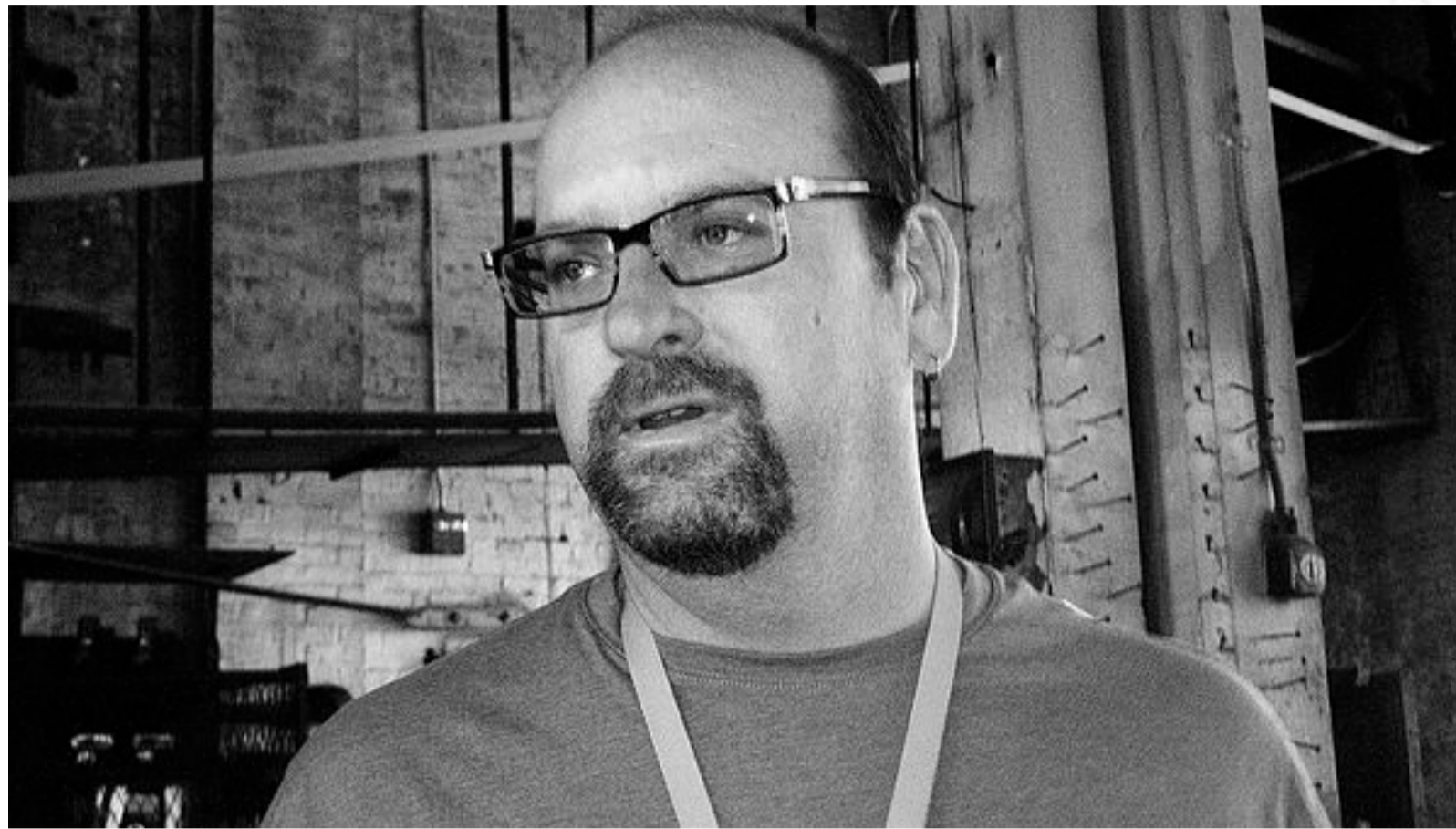


# The Star-Ledger



## Belmar's Mickens Depicts Jersey Life on the Big Screen

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By Kelly Skellinger

The sands of time recently washed seasoned cinematographer and former Belmar resident Mike Mickens back onto the Jersey Shore. Two years ago, while filming "Greetings from the Shore," on location in Lavallette, Mr. Mickens had the opportunity to journey back to the beach towns of his past, each chock full of "Bennys," beautiful beaches and seaside bars far, far away from his current home of Pasadena, Calif.

Mr. Mickens, a Clifton native whose mother and father, Olive "Pat" Mickens and Edward Mickens, owned a home in Belmar up until last year, moved to California in the early 1990s to work in feature films.

"Greetings from the Shore," a coming-of-age film detailing one girl's last summer at the Jersey Shore and her struggle to come to terms with her father's death before heading off to college, brought Mr. Mickens home to the Jersey Shore, to his family, childhood friends and the beach towns he frequented up until his mid-20s. Mr. Mickens' grandparents, Tom and Caroline Kowalski, purchased a home on 16th Avenue in Belmar shortly after WWII.

Mr. Mickens, who grew up in Clifton where his parents owned a home, spent his summers at his grandparent's home, playing in the sands off of Belmar's 16th Avenue beach and stuffing quarters into the arcade machines at Belmar's Playland on Ocean Avenue. When Mr. Mickens' grandparents died, his parents inherited the 16th Avenue residence.

Growing up in a large, creative family [Mr. Mickens' mother is a painter], Mr. Mickens would borrow his father's 8mm movie camera and shoot short films with his friends. Mr. Mickens' involvement in a high-school television-production program led him to create newscasts for a local cable channel and, shortly after, Mr. Mickens was shooting and directing music videos for local rock bands. After receiving a bachelor's degree in film production from Syracuse University's renowned Newhouse School, where Mr. Mickens trained to be a director, he began his career in New York City working as a production manager for MTV.

Mr. Mickens has worked as a cinematographer on a number of films, ranging in genre from action to crime films to thrillers and horror films and his most recent venture, "Greetings from the Shore," a coming-of-age drama. Some of Mr. Mickens' work includes, the 2008 "No Man's Land: The Rise of Reeker," the 2005 "Reeker," the 2001 "Just Can't Get Enough," the 2000 "Leprechaun in the Hood," the 2000 "Dead 7," and the 1998 "Alien Avengers II."

"Greetings from the Shore" has won 45 awards at over 60 film festivals, to date. The film stars Paul Sorvino, of "GoodFellas," David Fumero, of "One Life To Live," Jay O. Sanders, of "Half-Nelson," and the film's star, Kim Shaw, of "Sex and the City." Many have termed the film a heartfelt throwback in tone and content and have likened the film to 1980s classics such as "Dirty Dancing" and "Mystic Pizza." Mr. Mickens accepted the job on the set of "Greetings from the Shore" simply because, "It was a great script," he said. Mr. Mickens added that he regularly shoots horror films with R-ratings and, as a result, his son, Myles, 8, very rarely gets to watch his films. "This is kind of a chick flick," Mr. Mickens said of "Greetings from the Shore." "It is something my family can see," he added. Another plus to shooting the film was its location, Mr. Mickens said. "I totally got the vibe of the beach, going to the beach, working down there," Mr. Mickens said. "And I got to see my family." Mr. Mickens' parents visited him on location and were introduced to Mr. Sorvino, of whom they are fans. "It's a great movie," Mr. Mickens said. "You can bring the kids. You will see New Jersey in a new light."