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Mostly Clear

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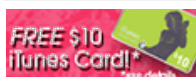
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Hollywood publicist has settled in on Maui

By [Curtis Lum](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

Blaise Noto has lived the life that many only dream of. He was a successful Hollywood publicist who worked with the biggest stars on their most successful movies and counts among his good friends actor and director Mel Gibson.

Noto was an executive vice president at Columbia Pictures and handled the publicity for such blockbusters as "Titanic," "Spider-Man," "Braveheart," "Forrest Gump" and "Terminator." His A-list of clients included Tom Cruise, Tom Hanks, Jack Nicholson, Julia Roberts, Will Smith and Steven Spielberg.

Despite the fame and fortune, Noto realized a little more than five years ago that something was missing in his life. He was becoming an administrator, rather than a marketing and public relations man, and he was getting tired of the Hollywood lifestyle.

So Noto packed his bags, said "so long" to the glitzy Los Angeles scene and moved to Kihei, Maui, where he owned a condo. The 54-year-old New York native formed Blaise Noto & Associates and continued his marketing and promotional work, although on a smaller scale.

Noto acknowledged that the decision to relocate to Maui was difficult. He declined to say how much of a pay



Blaise J. Noto visited Tashgurgan in China in 2006 to work on the independent film "Heart of a Dragon" and the movie version of the popular novel "The Kite Runner."

Blaise J. Noto



Blaise Noto

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decrease he's taken, except to say that it's "significant."

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"It took a lot to leave because you're making a lot of money, you're getting stock options and things like that," he said. "But basically I was going to bed with a pit in my stomach and I was waking up with a pit in my stomach. I wasn't really enjoying every single day."

Many colleagues speculated that Noto's move would be temporary and that he'd long for the fast-paced life of Hollywood. But Noto said he has no plans to return and has quickly established himself and his business on Maui.

"It's been much more rewarding the past five years because I've been doing things where I have the passion and the commitment and where I really like the people and we've become a team, versus just a client," Noto said.

Noto has done the promotional work for Hawai'i International Film Festival, the Hawai'i Film Partners' and Discovery Kids' TV series "Flight 29 Down," Mountain Apple Co., and Hapa's "Maui" CD. He's developed the publicity for Da Factory glass-blowing studio on Maui, Maui Nurses Scholarship Foundation's golf and tennis tournaments, Willie K's annual golf tournament, and several locally produced independent films.

Noto has become part of the community by joining the boards of Maui Memorial Medical Center Foundation, Friends of the Children's Justice Center, Maui Academy of Performing Arts, and Hui No'eau Visual Arts Center. Noto also teaches an entertainment marketing class at Maui Community College.

All of these activities are critical in Noto's drive to "reinvent" himself.

"You start to understand a little bit more about what really is important and what becomes important is if you really love what you're doing then you'll make money," Noto said. "You may not make as much money as you did before, but you know what? My life is a lot fuller for the change that I made."

Noto began his career as a glorified "secretary" at United Artists, but rose in the company to head publicity in the New England and West Coast areas. He then moved from studio to studio as he worked his way up the corporate ladder before deciding to move to Hawai'i.

He said he enjoys working with the people here and he approaches each job with the same zeal, whether it's to promote "Titanic" or Hapa's CD. Noto said money no longer determines whether he'll accept a job and he's even agreed to help promote a struggling Big Island musician who asked for help.

"With certain clients it's, 'You guys are starting up and you have to grow and I'll grow with you. I'll take the chance with you,' " he said. "I decided I really want to work on projects and with people that I really want to work with."

But don't get Noto wrong. He didn't move to Maui to slow down or retire.

He recently spent several months in Tashgurgan and Beijing in China to work on the independent film "Heart of a Dragon" and the movie version of the popular novel "The Kite Runner." He also did public relations for the Association of Film Commissioners International and its Locations Trade Show 2007 in Los Angeles, and will be doing the group's AFCI

Cineposium International Conference in Santa Fe, N.M., at the end of this month.

Technology allows Noto to continue his work without leaving the comforts of home, although he said many people continue to question whether he can be successful on Maui.

"We all have to get over the fact that you have an 808 area code versus a 310 area code and that you can do better. It's all about communications and it's all about being accessible. You can live just about anywhere in the world and do your job," he said.

He said the secret to his success is his understanding of his clients, as well as the public.

Noto said his experience in China has opened his eyes to a whole new world of possibilities. He said the Chinese have a "thirst" for knowledge about the film industry and he would like to spend more time there.

He'll be in Beijing for the premiere of "Heart of a Dragon" next year and will teach a course on film marketing and publicity at the Beijing Film Academy next summer.

Other than China, Noto is content with his life and business on Maui.

"How can you not enjoy living here?" he said. "You're driving somewhere and you see an amazing sunset and you pull over and say, 'I'm going to be two minutes late to dinner and that's OK.' I can't remember the last time anybody in Los Angeles pulled over to look at the sunset."

Reach Curtis Lum at culum@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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