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## CARRADINE FILM SIZES UP "AREA"

by Kirk Honeycutt

A Japanese-financed, independent film will fictionally examine a real-life mystery that now exists in the Nevada desert. "Area 51," written by Mike Gray -- Oscar nominated for co-writing a similar muckraking feature, "The China Syndrome" -- and directed by actor Robert Carradine, is slated to start production in June in Rachel, Nev.

The science-fiction thriller will focus on a government facility in Nevada known to UFO groupies as Area 51 or Groom Lake. Until recently, the Air Force denied the very existence of the site.

Thanks to considerable media attention, hundreds of people in recent weeks have converged on the perimeter of the site, located 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas on Nellis Air Force Base. There, they are convinced, the Air Force is reproducing a captured flying saucer.

Last weekend, CNN aired a story on the mysterious Area 51.

International Mondo Entertainment, a subsidiary of Mondo Corp., a major real estate and development company headquartered in Tokyo, will finance and Naofumi Okamoto, president of Apricot Entertainment, will produce the film.

Okamoto said the film's budget will be somewhere between \$5 million and \$8 million depending on the special effects.

The story concerns a female TV news producer trying to get to the bottom of the mysterious site.

Carradine, who makes his feature directing debut with this film, describes "Area 51" as a "detective story with a documentary sense of reality."

Okamoto said he and Carradine mutually came up with the idea for the film after seeing a half-hour documentary on Fox and reading stories about the site in several publications, including the New York Times and Popular Science.

Newsweek then reported in its Feb. 20 issue that five former and current government employees and the widow of a sixth have filed a lawsuit charging they were exposed to burning toxic wastes at the secret Air Force facility.

The widow, Helen Frost, has charged that poisonous fumes from plastics and chemicals thrown into open pits and doused with jet fuel contributed to her husband's death in 1989.

However, the workers' attorney has been stymied by the government's refusal to reveal the name of so-called "operating location" on the base. Without an officially recognized name, the suit cannot proceed.

What is known about the site is that it has been used as a testing ground for the U-2 spy plane and the F-117A Stealth.

Okamoto, who has headed Apricot Entertainment since its inception in 1989, said the company previously produced a film called "Illusion," which starred Emma Samms, Heather Locklear and Carradine.

The investment by International Mondo marks the company's first foray in the movie business, Okamoto said. International Mondo's Fuminori Hayashid will serve as the film's executive producer.

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