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COLD MOUNTAIN

JEAN LEVAC, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Dorina Pagliaro had to move to Toronto and immerse herself in vigorous dance training for three months to prepare for her role as a backup dancer in *Honey*. She also appeared with three other dancers in a Tweet video that was filmed as part of the movie.

Dancing her way to the top

A 21-year-old Ottawa dancer tells **Tony Lofaro** how easy it was to put up with the long hours required for her backup role in a recently released hip-hop film.

Dorina Pagliaro learned quickly about the fickleness of big-time movie-making when she auditioned for a role in the feature film *Honey*.

The 21-year-old Ottawa dancer heard about casting for the new hip-hop musical film through her agent and went to Toronto last year for the auditions.

She learned she was up against hundreds of other talented dancers for the roles of dozens of backup dancers in the film, which stars hot newcomer, Jessica Alba with cameos by Missy Elliott and Canadian hip-hop singer Shawn Desman.

"It was quite the audition process, they did it solely based on esthetics before you could even audition," said Ms. Pagliaro, who trained as a ballet, jazz, modern and tap dancer and was formerly with the Ottawa Renegades cheerleaders.

"They took a look at you to see if you had that certain look. They did not describe the look

exactly, but I guess they were looking for flavourful-type dancers, ethnic-looking, but with a trendy look. It was quite a mix, everyone looked different."

Ms. Pagliaro, who had a small speaking role in the sci-film *Decoys*, which was shot in Ottawa earlier this year, was selected to be a backup dancer role in the hip-hop film along with her friend, Melissa Flerangile.

The movie tells the story of Honey Daniels (Ms. Alba), an aspiring dancer and choreographer working in a bar who gets a big break when a video director offers her a spot as a backup dancer.

After her brief audition, Ms. Pagliaro was told six weeks later she got the part and then had to move to Toronto — where the U.S. film was shot — and underwent three months of vigorous dance training. She appears in a music video with singer Tweet, which is part of the movie, and also in several

other background scenes with the main actors.

For the Tweet music video, she said, the set was made to look "very futuristic" and she was one of four dancers attached to a leather harness.

She said the crew spent hours on her makeup and costume, and gave her red hair extensions and a Mohawk haircut, and dressed her in an elaborate futuristic outfit.

"There were long shoots sometimes, about 17 hours a day. The music video, because there was a lot of stopping and starting, took about two weeks to shoot," said Ms. Pagliaro, who often went home exhausted after a long day's filming.

She said she saw the film recently and was pleasantly surprised, although it was shock to see herself on the big screen.

Honey has been crucified by most film critics, although it seems to be popular with moviegoers, who enjoy its edgy, street-smart sensibility.

"The dancing is terrific and

the message is admirable, but nearly every line of dialogue and every plot turn is lazily constructed to meet our expectations," said *Edmonton Journal* reviewer Todd Babiak.

Nevertheless, working on the film for several months was an enjoyable experience, said Ms. Pagliaro, who is currently teaching dance to young students and is hoping for other movie projects to come her way. "To do something you love all day and work with people who have that same passion for their art is a great experience," she said.

She said with the slowdown in movie production in Canada she's not sure where the next film job is coming from, but she's proud of what she has accomplished so far.

"I feel fulfilled. At 21 years old, I feel I've done a lot with my dancing and accomplished the things I wanted to do, such as be in a feature film, work with big actors and enter (dance) competitions and also do some choreography."