Home for the holidays, Loveland High alum and his wife talk of ‘great journey’ working in movies

By Cara O’Brien
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As a child, Chris Armstrong reveled in creating worlds out of LEGOs. As an adult, Armstrong, originally from Loveland, revels in bringing those worlds to the silver screen.

He and his wife, actress Jenn Gotzon, visited Loveland last week after a whirlwind year in two Hollywood careers that are rapidly gaining speed.

Armstrong started his career planning to work in movie effects and computers. But he found a love, and an affinity, for screenwriting and directing instead.

“I enjoy telling the story,” he said.

He went to Cogswell Polytechnical College — chosen for its special effects and animation programs — in Silicon Valley and found mentors and professors who cheered his screenplays. And he found Jenn to play his leading lady in his thesis film, and then his leading lady in his life.

“It was nice to find someone else who shared the same kind of passion and energy,” Armstrong said.

She played a femme fatal in his film noir thesis film, then the two worked briefly for Google before moving to Los Angeles to try their luck in Hollywood. Since the move, in 2004, the couple has found, or perhaps, more accurately, worked hard for, their luck.

Armstrong runs his own company, Elysian Pictures, which does everything from lending equipment and shooting commercials to producing full-length feature films and working with cutting-edge technology. And Gotzon has been the lead in, at last count, 20 independent films. She’s acted in at least 50, and she’s played myriad bit parts in television shows such as “House,” “CSI: NY” and “Pushing Daisies.”

Gotzon is now promoting her latest project, her role as Nixon’s daughter Tricia in the recently released Ron Howard flick “Frost/Nixon.”

Gotzon, who speaks passionately about her work and her husband, said she connected soulfully with the trauma of the Nixon family.
“All of that (situation) came down on the children,” she said. “It was really transformational, it was fascinating, to be able to bring that moment of history alive on the screen.”

Neither Armstrong nor Gotzon is taking pause to revel in the successes of 2008. They have too much to do in the coming year.

Armstrong is in the preproduction stages of casting and writing for Elysian’s first full-length feature — tentatively called “One Small Life” — to begin filming in Louisiana this year.

And Gotzon’s been cast for a film called “Dante’s Inferno” and is in talks for a Lifetime network movie and at least a dozen other projects.

“It’s been a really great, great journey,” Gotzon said.

All along, the couple cheers each other along.

“It’s nice to have somebody who understands the business and that you can share with,” Armstrong said. “It’s a very challenging career.”

“I believe so much in Chris as a writer/director,” Gotzon said. “I just knew that he was going to be going places.”

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