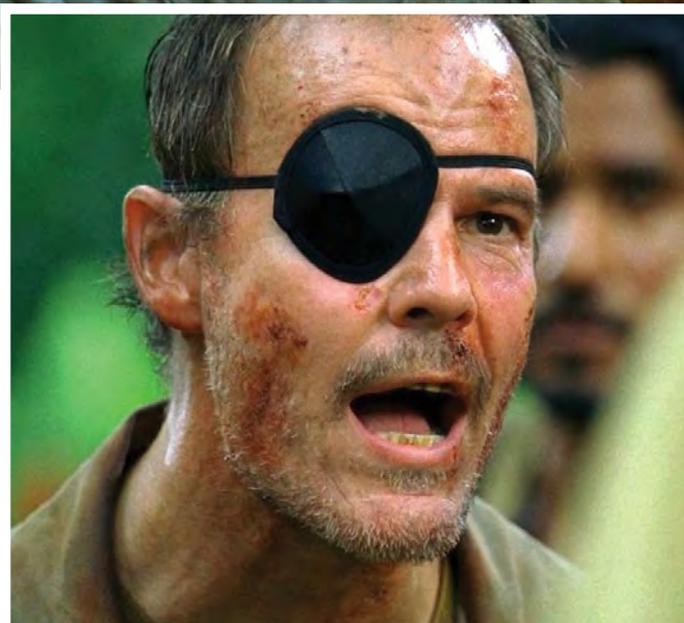




Lake Arrowhead resident Andrew Divoff as Mikhail Bakunin in the TV series *Lost*.

## A 'Bad Guy' with a Heart of Gold



Actor Andrew Divoff—perhaps best known for his role as Djinn in *The WishMaster*—may be originally from Venezuela, but he's a mountain man through and through now.

His Russian father had moved to South America where he was a wildcatter. "He'd drive out with a drill truck and poke around for oil," Divoff said. It was in Venezuela that his parents met—his mother was his father's boss' daughter.

His parents divorced when he was 10 so Divoff moved to Northern California with his

mother and sister. His mother worked for the State Department and was transferred to Spain; Divoff went with his mother and attended the University of Barcelona. Later he transferred to Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

"My dad decided he wanted to retire in the States," Divoff said, "and moved to Malibu. I came out to help him move in. I was a freeloading college kid!"

He recalls taking road trips with his father up to Lake Arrowhead. "The big thing that stuck in my mind was it was as

hot as heck down below but nice up here," Divoff said. "The weather can be moody. I'm fascinated by a place like that."

In 1990 he started renting different places on the mountain and would come up to stay for a week or two at a time. An avid skier, Divoff said he likes to be in the snow.

In 1992 he found the house where he still lives. "My career was burgeoning—I was getting a couple of really nice roles."

He was living in William Boyd's little bungalow in Hollywood. He decided to fix it up

but a big rainstorm flooded the foundation he was working on.

It was at that point Divoff decided to make the home he had already purchased in the mountains his main abode.

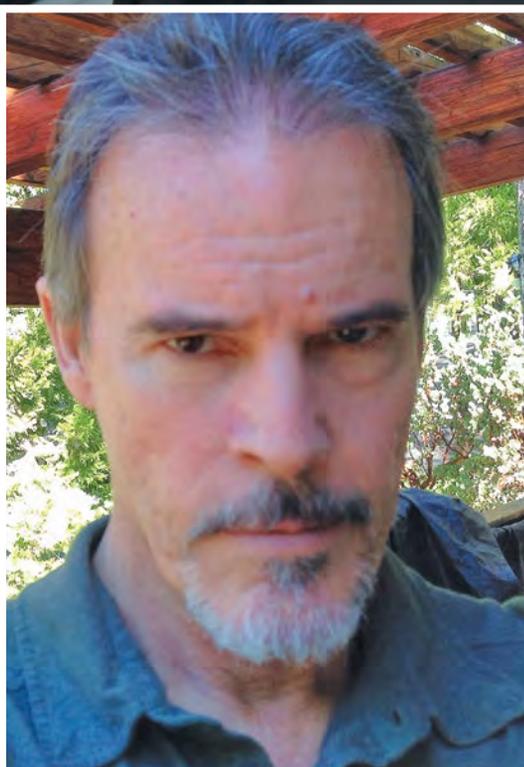
"I wasn't really into the Hollywood lifestyle. I got dragged into it," he said. "I decided I needed less of a fast pace. I liked the pace of life up here, the air and the trees. I felt better being in this environment."

It was after he made Lake Arrowhead his full-time home that he became aware of fellow actor Vincent Spano and the



MARY-JUSTINE LANYON

**Actor Andrew Divoff poured some of his Djinn's Hellabrew for a guest at the Lake Arrowhead Brewfest last August. He helped raise more than \$1,100 and 10 boxes of food for Operation Provider.**



good work he was doing with Operation Provider.

"He set a great example," Divoff said of Spano. "I decided any time I could help, I would like to help the community."

He first tried to help in the kitchen during Operation Provider's annual Christmas dinner

"It's great for the community to know that Operation Provider is there. Sometimes in a community there are people who need a hand at different times of the year. There's no stigma that I've seen about it on the mountain.

"I'm glad Holland is a con-

stant, always there." but was told, "You need to sit out front." And so he and Spano greeted the guests together.

"My association with Holland (Lowe, the executive director of Operation Provider) goes back a long way,"

Divoff said.

stant, always there."

To help Lowe and Operation Provider, Divoff poured his beer, Djinn's Hellabrew, at the Brewfest last August. Folks who made a contribution to Operation Provider of either cash or food got to taste his spicy brew.

"It was a no-brainer for me," Divoff said. "People like to try new beers."

### **BREWING HIS OWN BEER**

He started brewing about two years ago after being invited to a horror convention in Colorado. It was while there that someone told him the Djinn needs to have his own beer. "I thought it would be a great way to raise money for charity," Divoff said.

He brewed some beer and served it in Boston last year at a convention called Rock and Shock, pouring the beer to benefit Smile Train, a charity

that helps children with cleft lip and palate surgery, and a theater group that helps children with scholarships.

The beer went over so well that Divoff knew he had something. "I wanted to raise \$800—thought I'd be lucky to do so," he said. "We raised \$1,400. I was so proud."

When he returned to the mountain, he talked Eric Lee, the manager of Jensen's Finest Foods in Blue Jay, who told him about Wicks Brewery. "You can take your recipe there and they'll let you brew your beer there," Divoff said. So that's what he did, three months before the Brewfest. "That was my second-ever pour. I have another batch ready to go." He was waiting for the right charity. "It's a family time of year. I want to designate a charity that will help families."

Divoff recently spent time



**Andrew Divoff (left) keeps in shape for his movie roles at Bullworx, owned by fellow actor and friend Tommy Bull.**

in New York, working on a new project. While there, he traveled down to Biloxi, Miss., for a horror convention (his character, the Djinn, is a supremely evil entity who is released from a jewel and seeks to capture the soul of the woman who discovered him). At the convention he met a young man, Michael, who out of nowhere told Divoff he was a vet, has PTSD and wondered what it would take for him to get into acting.

“He told me if there was a class, he would jump into it. I thought it was a brilliant idea. I think acting might be a way out for him,” Divoff said. He plans to pursue the idea of setting up a class, raising some money to pay for a teacher.

## GETTING INTO ACTING

As for how Divoff himself got into acting, he said a housemate at Georgetown referred him to his uncle, who owned a limousine company. Divoff first got a job dispatching limos in Beverly Hills; then, after a year and a half, the owner asked if he was interested in purchasing and driving his own car.

Several of his clients were actors. “I remember Michael Caine very fondly,” Divoff said. “He was just a gentleman to everyone, certainly to me.” And he tells the story of offering to take Caine through the kitchen after a post-awards party, given by his agent, Swifty Lazar, but Caine insisted



**Fledgling brewer Andrew Divoff (center) took his Hellabrew recipe to Wicks Brewery where they turn it into a spicy beer. Pictured with him are Ryan Wicks (left) and Geo.**

on going out the front door.

“He signed autographs for an hour and a half,” said Divoff, who at the time was taking cold reading classes, learning how to audition.

“It was such a beautiful example to see that from Michael Caine.”

And while he was waiting to drive Caine to his destination, who pulled up but Jimmy Stewart. “He gave Michael Caine a big hug and

went in to say hello to Swifty Lazar, who was his agent, too. That was so amazing for a kid starting out with his acting.”

That was the day of the beeper. One day Divoff got a beep and saw it was his agent. He followed the instructions to call a casting director, who was interested in him as he speaks Russian. Divoff was told to scream something like “stop that truck” in English with a Russian accent, then say it in Russian.

“They asked if I could be at the set in an hour and a half. That show was the series *Weird Science*.”

Languages have most definitely come into play with Divoff’s success. He speaks

eight: English, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Catalan, Portuguese and Russian.

“Were it not for the languages, I would not be where I am right now,” Divoff said.

When people ask him about typecasting—he nearly always plays the bad guy—Divoff quotes Thomas Jefferson, a polyglot himself: “You are as many different people as the languages you speak.”

“What he meant,” Divoff said, “is when you speak a different language you should take into consideration the culture it comes from. Presumably you have some grounding in that language’s culture.”

He has played two “good guy” roles in his career. “I have never been so bored,” Divoff said. “It’s fun to be the bad guy. The parameters for what they’re allowed to do are a lot wider than for the good guys.”

His work still calls for a lot of physicality, which is why he works out at Bullworx with his friend and fellow actor Tommy Bull.

“One of the most important things is stretching, which enables me to film a fight scene at the drop of a hat,” Divoff said.

“I’m proud to say that at 60 I’m still out there getting my booty kicked and kicking some of my own.” ■

—By Mary-Justine Lanyon