

# Lights, Camera, Water Jets!

The movie production business provides a new and exciting market for an aggressive, inventive water blasting company in southeast Florida

By Rosalie E. Leposky

he staff at Precision Hydro-Blasting in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is used to client requests for service, but nothing had prepared James M. "Jamie" Seboth, the firm's operations and division manager, for a call he received from contractor Ed Elwel.

Elwel, owner of Elwel Construction Company in Fort Lauderdale, asked Jamie to demonstrate cleaning techniques for his sister, Liz, a location manager for the production company filming the big-budget movie "Fast and Furious 2" (FF2).

That led to several contracts from Liz, including cleaning the abandoned East Coast Fishery restaurant site on the north side of the Miami River, removing tire marks from the driveway of a waterfront home on Biscayne Bay once owned by actor Sylvester Stallone, and cleaning city streets and parking-lot surfaces.

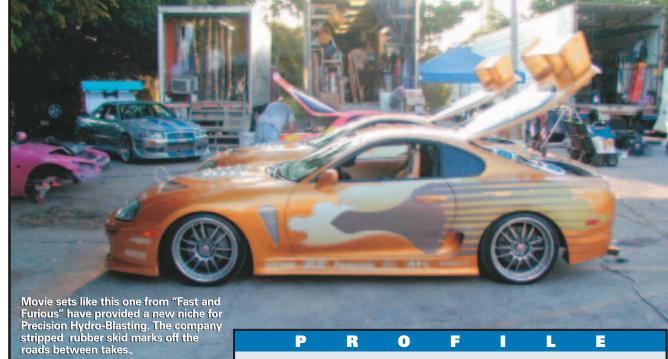
"The East Coast Fishery building required five hours of cleaning the floors and walls before the film-makers could use the building," says Jamie. "To do this cleaning, we used ultra-high-pressure water blasting equipment from Aqua-Dyne, Inc. Speed and thoroughness were important."

"It's hours of standing around in a parking lot until we are called, and then getting in quickly, collecting the rubber, and getting out quickly."

Jamie Seboth (on work in the movie industry)

Film-makers work long hours. During FF2 filming, Jamie spent all day supervising regular clients' projects, then stayed up all night on 12-hour shoots. He and a co-worker followed director Terry Leonard's instructions to clean up ribbons of laid rubber so the film-makers could set up for the next take.

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getting in quickly, collecting the rubber, and getting out quickly," says Jamie. "We used our specially equipped Aqua-Dyne hydro-blasters. I took the job rather than assign one of our employees, just in case the specially modified machine broke and I had to fix it." The machine worked fine.

# **Mechanic and inventor**

While movie-making isn't yet an everyday occurrence for Jamie, he likes it and plans to pursue more of it in the future.

Jamie himself adapted the equipment he used for the FF2 shoot. A mechanic with 28 years of experience, he's accustomed to modifying — and sometimes even building — the machinery to get jobs done quicker and better. "We share information with other companies outside our area who want to use the modifications we've created using Aqua-Dyne equipment," he says. "Aqua-Dyne tells other clients with similar jobs to call me. Typically they are newer companies just entering the business."

# Precision Concrete Cutting and Precision Hydro-Blasting, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

OWNER: Florian Aberle

FOUNDED: Precision Concrete Cutting 1994,

**Precision Hydro-Blasting 2000** 

**SERVICE AREA: Southeastern United States** 

**EMPLOYEES:** 16 cross-trained

WEB SITE: www.precisionconcretecutting.net

Precision Hydro-Blasting and a sister company, Precision Concrete Cutting, were founded by Florian Aberle, a North Dakota farm boy who gained 20 years' experience in concrete cutting around the nation before launching Precision Concrete Cutting in 1994.

"Florian started the company with hard work and dedication and a small family loan. In the beginning, he cut all the concrete himself," says Jamie. "He used the borrowed money to purchase slab saws and hand saws."

## **Diverse client base**

After he set up Precision Concrete Cutting, Florian noted the possibilities of hydro-pumps. In 1999, after seeing an Aqua-Dyne GA100 at the Pumper and Cleaner Expo, he researched all manufacturers in the market and found that Aqua-Dyne's equipment best suited his needs. In 2000, he set up Precision Hydro-Blasting.

Today, Precision Concrete Cutting serves construction and residential clients. Its specialties include cutting and

# **Making It Big**

Florida ranks third in entertainment-production revenues, after California and New York City. Commercials, movies, and music production bring \$3.9 billion a year into the Sunshine State, and \$2.5 billion (almost 65 percent) goes to the southeastern counties that Precision Hydro-Blasting serves.

Jamie Seboth, operations and division manager, notes that film production can be an attractive market for service contractors. Even without a referral, cleaning firms seeking movie work — in Florida and elsewhere — can contact their state and local film commissions to receive announcements of upcoming projects, Jamie says.

To let producers know they are available, contractors can advertise in production guides listing vendors for every imaginable product and service.

removal of concrete indoors and out, including slab removal and the cutting of walls, doorways, and windows. Precision Hydro-Blasting serves the construction, marine, and movie industries, and other industrial and commercial clients.

The fleet of the combined companies includes 11 Ford service trucks, Sterling box trucks used for the hydro-blasters, GA100 and GA200 trailer-mounted Aqua-Dyne hydro-blasters, 2001 Mack roll-off trucks used to carry containers for concrete removal, and a Ford van outfitted to carry core-drilling equipment for cores up to 36 inches. The company also owns assorted other pickup trucks, and equipment trailers to carry a Bobcat loader and attachments.

# To cut a wider path

Precision Hydro-Blasting was the first Florida company to use 40,000 psi ultra-high-pressure equipment. The company started its inventive ways in the earliest days of the business. When the GA100 pump was new, Jamie and Florian saw opportunities to develop new tooling to expand its capabilities.

"We started fabricating our own tooling," says Jamie. "When we purchased the GA100, its floor machine cleaned a 6-inch-wide path. We fabricated a doublehead floor machine that cleans a footwide path. Currently we're designing a floor-cleaning machine, which we will fabricate ourselves, to cut an even wider



A technician removes a 6-inch thermoplastic highway stripe using Precision Hydroblasting's custom-designed floor machine, operating at 40,000 psi/4 gpm. The unit has 12 nozzles, two 6-inch spray bars, and vacuum containment.

path. We will purchase tools, including handheld Mini Scrubber units, from Aqua-Dyne."

Precision Hydro-Blasting also fabricated a vacuum containment system that collects paint and other debris as it cleans, eliminating airborne materials and post-spray cleanup. "Even when

"Even when we are removing paint, everything is collected in a tank. Cleanup used to take too long. Customers like our new mess-free system that saves man-hours by eliminating two to three hours of sweeping and rinsing cleaned areas each day."

**Jamie Seboth** 

we are removing paint, everything is collected in a tank," Jamie says. "Cleanup used to take too long. Customers like our new mess-free system that saves man-hours by eliminating two to three hours of sweeping and rinsing of cleaned areas each day."

### **Making surfaces spiffy**

Precision Hydro-Blasting uses its new technology to remove thermal plastic highway-marking paint from highway surfaces. "Older paint-removal methods would grind off the paint, removing the road's surface along with the paint," Jamie says.

"The Florida Department of Transportation wants the paint to be removed without damaging the asphalt, so two years ago we built our vacuum-containment equipment. With water, we are able

Precision Hydroblasting technician Flo Aberle strips paint from water line down to achieve bare aluminum on the hull of a charter boat at the Lauderdale Marine Center.



"On boats, we often use rotary hand guns or robotic cleaning systems with vacuum attachments. When we started Precision Hydro-Blasting, we used Aqua-Dyne's 24/7 technical support. They always walked us through any problems. We never had down time because of equipment failure. Ultra-high-pressure stripping of a 50-foot boat hull typically requires a day, and a 130-foot-boat three or four days."

**Jamie Seboth** 

Precision Concrete Cutting was hired to remove 14 inches of concrete from an in-ground fuel vault at the Miami International Airport before repouring of new concrete. Amaury Rodriguez is shown using a 40,000 psi rotary gun and an Aqua-Dyne GA 100 DT pump.



A technician cleans lime deposits from impellers at the City of Sunrise (Fla.) water treatment plant, using a 40,000 psi rotary gun.

to remove the strip and leave the roadway intact. We prefer to do this work during the day, but depending on traffic and how many feet of strip needs to be removed, we sometimes work at night."

Company crews also use ultra-high-pressure equipment to remove paint from steel and aluminum boats. "We service hulls on boats lifted out of the water at marinas all over Florida, and we strip the topsides of boats while they remain in the water, using vacuum recovery systems." says Jamie.

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A strip mall in Lauderdale by the sea hired Precision to clean about 17,000 square feet of the mall's painted, peeling concrete walkways. "We had to do this while the mall was open without disrupting business," says Jamie. "We used our full vacuum-containment system and did a few shops every day. We blocked any one shop's doorway for just a few minutes."

# Adaptive reuse

Changing the use of an existing building often requires significant retrofitting and cleanup. One such structure is the one-million-square-foot Omni International Mall that anchors the north side of downtown Miami. Built in 1977, the mall had a center core with a 528-room, 20-story hotel on top of a traditional shopping mall located between two department stores. The 4,000-square-foot space formerly occupied by the Jordan Marsh department store has been gutted and now is being reconfigured by Miller Construction Company of Fort Lauderdale to house the Miami Campus of the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale.

"The new building design required strengthening the floors to support heavier weight loads," says Jamie. "To profile two-foot-square columns, we used Aqua-Dyne's Mini Scrubbers and our vacuumcontainment system.

Before Precision started its work, the concrete floor was cut away from all four sides of 109 support columns. The resulting surfaces were 28 feet long. "We cleaned and profiled the four sides of the columns so additional poured concrete would adhere to the surface of the columns, creating four-foot-square columns. The project required strict water control."

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