Britain’s Vertigo Films and the National Film and Television School have joined forces to create the Vertigo School Project, designed to allow NFTS students and graduates to create microbudget (about $165,000) features. The first of these, a horror project called GUINEA PIGS, just started shooting today.

Screen Daily reports that Ian Clark scripted and is directing, with Megan Stuart and Mat Wakeham producing. The story centers on eight volunteers in a drug trial that goes horrifically wrong; the cast is headed by Aneurin Barnard, Alex Reid (pictured) from THE DESCENT and ARACHNID, Amit Shah and Steve Evets. “This is a unique and thrilling opportunity to launch the careers of graduate filmmakers in a way that Vertigo have done with similar low-budget films such as LONDON TO BRIGHTON and IN SEARCH OF A MIDNIGHT KISS,” Vertigo’s Allan Niblo tells the trade. “We are thrilled to be working with such a talented team both in front of and behind the scenes.” Adds NFTS topper Nik Powell, “True talent is not stifled by lack of resources—the budget might be micro but great storytelling together with outstanding talent can achieve big things!” Two more Vertigo School Projects are also gearing up: LUSTRE, scripted by Mahalia Rimmer, in which two teenage girls engage in a series of dares that spiral out of control, and THE STATE, written and to be directed by Masood Khan and Shakil Mohammed, a thriller set in a future where the West has lost the war on terror.

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