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In Utah This Week

Entertainment

The Director Speaks: "We didn't think this would work."

by: Sam Vicchilli



Brigham Young University graduate Ben Gourley learned much about the movie-making process while making "Moving McAllister," a movie he co-wrote and stars in.

He wrote a few drafts of the film before shooting began, and kept writing even during production, usually due to budget or time constraints. "We wouldn't have time to shoot this. We didn't think this would work," Gourley recalls.

One scene in particular illustrates this point: At one juncture during the road trip to California, Gourley, with co-stars Mila Kunis and Jon Heder, wind up in a dive of a bar run by a man (Billy Drago) who goes by the name Lady. Movie buffs will recognize Drago as Sean Connery's killer in "The Untouchables."

In the finished film, Drago is an oddball who wants to see Heder and Gourley fight, which they do. In the scripted version, "it was going to be a karaoke-singing woman. We were going to get a jazz singer. When the scene changed, that all went away. It turned into a boxing match."

What precipitated the change? Lack of money to rent several tuxedos. Oh, the joys of independent cinema. ("McAllister" was privately funded.)

Apart from learning when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em, Gourley says he learned a lot about himself.

"I had a really good experience writing the story. It was a transcendent process in my own life. I learned to stop and smell the roses, live your life and don't worry so much about getting ahead."

That last lesson is especially important now that he's living in Los Angeles, hoping for the kind of success Heder, a college buddy, has found.

"You don't know what you're getting into," Gourley says of moving to Hollywood. "You either make it work, or you sink."