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THE TALENT

ADAM RODNESS

This Thornhiller dishes on his breakout role opposite '80s teen icon Corey Haim in the new mob comedy Shark City

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BY ANDREW CHIN

STEPPING INTO UPSCALE Italian eatery Sotto Sotto, it's hard to shake the feeling that this is a place for modern royalty. Candid photographs of celebrities dining there adorn the restaurant's walls and the wait staff is full of delicious details.

While photos of a beaming Jean Chrétien and a red-faced Keanu Reeves may dazzle most, Thornhill actor Adam Rodness has been haunted by one star in particular in the past few months: Corey Haim.

That's because the 1980s heartthrob Haim and Rodness share an upcoming movie: *Shark City*. It's a risqué indie film following two stock traders, living in New York City in their early thirties, whose lives become entangled with the mob.

It is also Haim's comeback movie — an event that's been hyped up by his noble undressing of his soul in the reality TV hit *The Two Coreys*, with Haim's *License to Drive* co-star Corey Feldman.

"Make sure your first question is about Corey Haim," Rodness's manager Bret Patriquin says. "All anyone's been asking him about the past few months has been Corey Haim and [*Shark City* co-star] Vivica Fox. His eyes will bug out."

While Rodness did not bug out and is gracious about the subject ("He's a good guy. We got along very well," he says), the actor has more pressing matters to talk about than hanging out with Haim off set. After all *Shark City* is his first significant film role, and he gets to play the nice guy that everyone rags on.

"They're making fun of me because I'm trying to grow a beard for the first time," he explains.

The role also involves Rodness getting beat up, and while he did suffer some minor whiplash from filming the scene where he gets pistol whipped, few things can hold the energetic Rodness down.

In addition to *Shark City*, Rodness is coming off the high of selling a thirty-minute short film, called *Gorgeous*, he co-produced and stars in. It made the Toronto International Film Festival and is in the process of being adapted into a feature film.

"It's a movie about a colourist who

can never get the girl and eventually gets to turn into a gorgeous guy for a day," he says of the film's plot. "It's a teen comedy, and I play the gorgeous guy. Not to say that I'm the most gorgeous guy out there, but the character was cool. Overly cocky at times but so excited that he has a butt and can go out there and wink at a girl without her thinking that he's a creep."

Although he played the glamorous role, Rodness discovered that the 18-month process of making the short was anything but. Setbacks from an actor dropping out the day before shooting would demoralize most, but Rodness sees this as his path to success.

"I find that, to be successful in the business, you have to make it happen yourself. You have to run after it and chase it down before you get chased out of it," he says. "So my model now is to create short films and sell them to production companies. Get the money and produce the features."

If the 25-year-old Rodness seems a bit too young to be spouting off wisdoms of a seasoned vet, it's important to know that he's technically been performing since he was four years old.

The son of wedding singing team Jody and Larry Rodness, Adam would accompany them onstage playing maracas. Eventually he would move on and strike out on his own in Thornhill at the age of 13.

"I needed money, so I started my own DJ company," he says. "I would DJ my friends' birthday parties and then DJ and host bar mitzvahs — that was my bread and butter all through high school. I would work one or two days on the weekend and make three times more money than my friends working at the mall."

Growing up around Bathurst and Atkinson, Rodness was a natural entertainer.

When he wasn't providing the soundtrack to a boy's journey into manhood, he was cracking jokes and being sent to detention. While his jocular ways impressed the girls, it prevented Rodness from following his dream.

"My parents wouldn't let me

audition due to grade issues," he says.

He found solace in the school's digital arts program and the comfort of his hometown.

"Thornhill was a great place to grow up. There's a lot of great people there, and fascinatingly enough, there's a lot of famous actors and musicians that come out of Thornhill," he says. "It's kind of a breeding ground for entertainment, with a lot of people going after the entertainment world and ending up being successful."

After graduating, Rodness was finally free to audition for movies and decided to move to Los Angeles at the tender age of 19. Moving into an open room in Beverly Hills, Rodness got to live an Aaaron Spelling-esque life: hanging out with people from MTV, auditioning for non-union jobs, having random conversations with Sharon Stone at the Sunset Strip Coffee Bean, doing a cheesy weather gig on an Internet radio show and weekend forays to Las Vegas.

"At the time, I really believed that I would be walking down the street and someone would spot me and go, 'You!'," he says with a laugh. "It was great, I met a ton of people, and I wasted all my money. It was all gone in a span of four months."

Moving back home, Rodness readapted his big dream to his current mandate of working on multiple small projects at a time.

While studying radio and television broadcasting at Seneca College, Rodness took on a hosting gig for two shows on the all-electronic music television channel bpm.tv. Admitting that, "My teachers weren't so fond of me at that point because I was always missing class," Rodness would host the shows *Electronica* and *Foreign Flow* until mid-2005.

Afraid of being pigeonholed as a video host, Rodness started working on several projects, including Blog TV where he would visit sets, such as *The Trailer Park Boys*, with an H2 Hummer decked out with cameras. He was also doing radio work, interning on the Mix 99.9 morning

show *Humble & Fred* before deciding to follow his ultimate dream: "to become a successful actor/writer/producer/director — spread my wings and go after all aspects."

His impressive resumé got him hired for an upcoming role in the Global miniseries *Cold Blood*, about David Milgaard, where he plays Milgaard's best friend/betrayer Ron Wilson.

Rodness's hometown buzz is on the rise. Excited about seeing himself on-air, aged as a 45-year-old ("they pinned my hair back and gave me a receding hairline; dipped some wrinkles on my face"), Rodness continues to dip into other genres.

He appeared in the homegrown web series *Team Epic* (tagline: There's super ... And there's epic) about Canada's B-class superheroes uniting after the death of Canada's greatest superhero. He played "a very metrosexual manager for a group of B-class superheroes who would lie about his flying ability."

Proclaiming web TV the "next generation of this business," Rodness is emphatic about the importance of "establishing yourself in your home base first."

"Don't rush it," he says. "Avoid the mistake that I made. Work your butt off in Toronto, and don't be embarrassed to put your stuff on paper and call up huge production companies to try to get a meeting. L.A. will always be there, and they'll come after you once your stuff is done and once your notoriety is established."

However, he also has some tips for people who will ignore his advice and go to Los Angeles to live their dream until the money runs out.

"My favourite part of going to L.A. is sitting in the airplane and seeing who I'll be sitting next to," Rodness says. "I had the opportunity to sit next to Dave Thomas from SCTV, and we had a five-hour conversation about the business. He wrote me a recommendation letter, and we maintained a relationship. Meeting all these people, they'll help you out in the end."

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