
ENTERTAINMENT LOCAL

Minogue brings *Prodigals* to big screen



By Brian Kelly, Sault Star
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Prodigals is based on a stage play written by former Sault Ste. Marie resident Sean Minogue.

Prodigals came back to Sault Ste. Marie to be filmed just like Sean Minogue wanted. The former Sault resident was hopeful the movie version of his play would be shot in the city. But he also knew other factors, such as tax incentives, could very well dictate where *Prodigals* was filmed

“I can set a screenplay anywhere I want and hope to God that the producers will actually shoot it there,” Minogue told *The Sault Star* during a recent telephone interview from Toronto. “But sometimes production concerns, they don't often lead that way.”

He also co-wrote, with Nicholas Carella, the screenplay for the drama that gets its world premiere at Whistler Film Festival with showings Thursday and Saturday. Minogue's play ran for 10 days in Vancouver in 2011. The digital marketer with *NOW Magazine* is keen to see a new chapter in his story follow six years later.

“It's nice to see it come to a head with a new life,” said the White Pines Collegiate and Vocational School graduate. “I'm just as excited as anyone else to see what it's going to be looking like up on the big screen and see how it translates from the play to the film.”

He's keen to make the trip west to see *Prodigals* – Minogue wasn't directly involved in the production - but he anticipates his presence will come down to “a last-minute decision.”

Adjusting his play for film meant streamlining what was an ensemble effort to a focus on one character.

Prodigals centres on Wesley (David Alpay), who returns home to aid with a friend's murder trial. He finds his former girlfriend, Jen (Sara Canning), is involved with someone else.

“He re-encounters the regrets he has about leaving and tries to make things right,” said Minogue. “But his motivations are ultimately selfish and destructive to everyone else who has moved on since he left.”

He knows the transition to screen means a good portion of dialogue dedicated to “having a lot of fun with some Sault in-jokes” was cut.

Minogue is keeping his fingers crossed *Prodigals* will be shown in the Sault and those he remembers from his 11 years living in the city will be in the audience.

“I hope that the people that I grew up with in the Sault, and who get the same jokes and understand the same sense of humour that I had and developed when I was there, I hope they really get those references as well and enjoy it,” he said.

Minogue has worked on his first novel over the last three years. He received some extra help when he was awarded a scholarship from Writers' Trust of Canada. He was mentored by David Bergen, winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize in 2005 for *The Time In Between*, at Humber College between January and July.

“David Bergen was really essential in helping me structure the story and ensuring I hit all the beats to keep up the dramatic tension throughout,” he said. “He also helped me focus on character development, which is crucial for this project as it balances the perspectives of three different characters who are all experiencing the effects of a significant global event.”

Minogue plans to have his science fiction concept with a dramatic narrative ready to bring to publishers in the next six to 12 months. The work doesn't have a firm title yet. "It's a very refreshing slog," said Minogue of his latest creative project. "My previous writing projects have generally involved working within larger teams and production timelines, which occasionally meant making quick decisions that weren't always ideal for the stories I wanted to tell."

For Minogue, who studied English at Carleton University and writing for film and television at Vancouver Film School, writing his novel allows him to "rediscover why I wanted to become a writer in the first place."

"It's fun as hell to invent characters then throw problems their way and see how they fumble around trying to solve them," he said.

Minogue's move from Vancouver to Toronto in 2012 also came with a shift in focus from theatre and film to fiction and non-fiction writing. But he acknowledges with *Prodigals* getting a movie treatment, now might be the time to revisit his stage background.

"When a film comes out there's obviously a whole new life and interest within that story," he said. "You never know. I might look at it now."

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