

## A Reporter's futile search for his film alter ego

Duffy Jennings

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Adam Goldberg's profile on the Internet Movie

Database Web site begins with the pithy

observation that he is "an actor with a talent for mining the neuroses of his characters for both comedic and dramatic effect."

This gift doubtless served the veteran character actor well for his role as Sol in the Oscar-winning film "A Beautiful Mind" and multiple appearances as Russell Shultz on the TV series "Head Cases."

But I must say it was cause for some concern on my part upon learning that the 36-year-old Goldberg is playing me when I was a Chronicle reporter in the forthcoming feature film "Zodiac," about the serial killer who terrorized Northern California in the 1960s and '70s.

Like almost everyone else, I have a few neuroses, but I wasn't sure how I felt about having them "mined" by a Hollywood actor for comedic or dramatic effect.

How, I wondered, could he possibly tap into the nuances of my inquisitive personality, my unique facial expressions, the precise timbre of my voice on that April morning nearly 30 years ago when I shouted into the phone to police homicide Inspector Dave Toschi: "We just got another Zodiac letter!"

Fortunately, his role as yours truly in the movie is so minuscule that it will escape the attention of all the critics except the harshest ones -- my family and friends -- who probably will say it wasn't big enough. One hundred minutes into the 155-minute film he introduces himself as me to Jake Gyllenhaal as Robert Graysmith, lights up a smoke and, well, that's about it. He does have another line later. But what's up with the beard? Never had one, never will.

"Can he do that? Just play you in a movie without calling you?" asked my daughter, Danielle, when I told her Goldberg hadn't contacted me beforehand. "Doesn't he have to get your permission or something?"

I guess not. And it's not as if I didn't try to reach him.

It started nearly a year ago with an e-mail from my son, Adam, himself a budding young Los Angeles actor, telling me that his girlfriend had seen an online casting notice for the part. It called for a "30-ish male, blond, slightly chubby."

Well, I was miffed. But all was forgiven a few weeks later when I learned that the role had gone to Goldberg, who looks nothing at all like me but at least is a rail-thin fellow. Yet I was still curious to talk to my new alter ego to find out how he planned to bring me to life on the big screen.

Thus began a drawn-out saga of efforts to find him. Over the past nine months, I have left messages chasing Goldberg through two talent agencies ("I'll let him know you called") and three PR firms ("We used to represent him, but not anymore").

I finally connected last month with his current publicist, Rene Ridinger, who returned my call on the third voice mail.

She apologized profusely, citing recent duties at the Sundance Film Festival and a subsequent cold, and said Goldberg had been traveling.

"Adam is back but had a ton of meetings today," she said in a Feb. 1 e-mail. "He's going to call me tomorrow so we can get a time figured out. I will call or e-mail you as soon as we have connected tomorrow."

Yes, at last!

But then, more waiting. Sigh. I'm sure Ridinger tried valiantly, but it was fruitless.

In the end, Goldberg proved as elusive as Zodiac, who was never found either. But at least Zodiac called and wrote to The Chronicle when we were looking for him.

Duffy Jennings is a freelance writer.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/02/25/PKGANO4TRJ1.DTL>

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