

# Majesty in a simpler form

*Young actress Sally Andrews and director Mark Gordon discuss new film*

**By Maggie Grainger, Senior Staff Writer**

There are many pressures young actresses must face in Hollywood today, but Sally Andrews is not letting any of them get to her. The 15-year-old star was just excited to get off the plane safely in San Diego after the long 12-hour flight from New Zealand to promote the new movie *Her Majesty*.

In *Her Majesty*, Andrews plays Elizabeth Wakefield, a young girl who learns to deal with all the pressures of growing up in a small town full of prejudices. She spends her days dreaming about Queen Elizabeth II - who she has always dreamed of meeting. That day comes sooner than she thinks when it is announced the Queen is stopping in Elizabeth's small, fictional town of Middleton, as part of her New Zealand tour.

But before the big day arrives, Elizabeth must learn to deal with a bratty brother, misunderstanding parents and a best friend who finds it hard just being normal. She also befriends an old Maori woman (Vicky Haughton of *Whale Rider* fame) who shows her just because adults say something, doesn't make it right.

Andrews, who was 11 years old when filming began, said she is excited the film is finally being released and can't wait until her New Zealand friends see it in January. The young actress also recently discovered she won best actress in a film at the San Diego Film Festival. *Her Majesty* has received three New Zealand film awards, among several others.



For director Mark J. Gordon, the film has really been a labor of love. It took him 13 years to get his story off the drawing board and onto the big screen.

"I wanted to write about another culture," Gordon said. "If I could do that and make it believable then I was happy."

A 43-year-old native of Los Angeles, Gordon said he always wanted to shoot a film in New Zealand, "I always wanted to go to New Zealand, so I thought I could write my way there. It eventually happened."

Gordon said the New Zealanders were very friendly and welcoming to him and his crew.

"The people are wonderful. Just don't believe them about



Courtesy photo  
In the film, young Elizabeth (Andrews) befriends Hira (Haughton), an old Maori woman.



Courtesy photo  
Los Angeles director Mark Gordon said he dreamed of filming a movie in beautiful New Zealand.

the weather," he said with a laugh. "They said not to worry about the rain - that it would only rain about eight times during the shoot. It rained eight times in the first 11 days of shooting! We almost had to shut down."

Despite the weather challenges, Gordon said the shoot went relatively smoothly, which he partially attributed to working with mature young actors such as Andrews and Craig Elliot, who plays Elizabeth's brother Stewart Wakefield.

"Sally and Craig worked very hard and were very professional," he said. "It was their first time in front of the

camera and they were so down to earth."

New Zealand has been a hot commodity since the release of *Whale Rider* and the popular *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, which is part of the reason why Gordon says he also chose to film the movie there.

"I want to show the complexity of the country and get beneath the surface," Gordon said. "Show the truth and more of the history."

Gordon says you can't really compare *Her Majesty* with the highly successful *Whale Rider*, because the stories are completely different. But he says if *Her Majesty* is even half as successful as *Whale Rider*, then he will be more than thrilled.

"I want people to realize that this is not just a kid or family film," he said. "People will be surprised by the complexity of it. There is something for everyone ... singles, couples. I've seen grown men walk out of the theater wiping a tear from their eyes."

As for young Sally, she plans on an acting career and moving to the United States. For now, she is just excited to be in San Diego and see the sites before she has to go back to school.



Courtesy photo  
Elizabeth's (Andrews) marching coach Mr. Dixon (Cameron Smith) escorts her down the aisle.

"We are going to Sea World sometime this week and Seaport Village," she said.

*Her Majesty* opens in select theaters Friday. For more information, visit [www.hermajestythemovie.com](http://www.hermajestythemovie.com).