



Young New Zealand actress Sally Andrews stars as a girl who's excited to meet Britain's Queen Elizabeth II just after her coronation.



Independent movie director Mark J. Gordon is pleased about the potential of his family film, *Her Majesty*, finally making it to DVD. The movie won a string of awards at the final Marco Island Film Festival. The DVD is set to be released Aug. 29. Submitted photo

MARCO ENGLE

## Acclaimed Marco Film Fest movie makes it to DVD

By Quentin Roux  
@roux@marcoengle.com

It's no secret that independent film makers face a David and Goliath battle when it comes to securing distributors for their films.

The distributors, key to the industry, are a really hard sell. They seldom even bother to look at independent movies, except maybe at the bigger festivals such as Sundance, Toronto and Cannes.

But, persistence in the face of the distribution juggernaut can pay off, as it has in the case of Mark J. Gordon, whose *Her Majesty* picked up a quiver of

awards at the final Marco Island Film Festival in 2004.

Gordon, who actually secured a limited theater release for the film, is bullish about now having it released to DVD.

"A lot of indies don't get any release at all," Gordon said Thursday from his Los Angeles office.

"In our case, a major DVD distributor showed interest in us even before we got our theatrical release. They had received an e-mail from their acquisitions department, who had probably heard about us



A scene from the movie depicts the moment before actress Sally Andrews' character meets the Queen.

## BUSINESS

### Majesty

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from the various festivals."

The distribution company (Image Entertainment), Gordon said, has the kind of infrastructure that enables them to get their products into outlets such as Best Buy, Circuit City and the online giant, Netflix.

In addition, he said, the company has its own publicity department, which in business terms, clearly works for mutual interest.

Also, Gordon said, a plus for his particular movie — a period piece shot in New Zealand about a young girl befriending an elderly Maori woman on the eve of Queen Elizabeth II's visit to the country after her 1953 coronation — is that besides being a family film, it doesn't date.

"Lots of times, a DVD can do better than a theatrical run," he said.

Nevertheless, it's invariably a slow process, unless — hypothetically, he said — someone like Oprah Winfrey blesses the film on her show.

"Then it's zero to 60 in two seconds," Gordon said.

That's just one of the vagaries of an industry in which film makers have to be every bit as



*Her Majesty* is set to be released on DVD by Image Entertainment on Aug. 29. Submitted photo

financially astute as they are creative with their movies.

Gordon, who actually took more business classes at film school than any other classes, said a lot of young filmmakers fall into the trap of revealing their budgets, for example.

"That provides information that can be used against them when somebody wants to buy the rights," he said.

"People should judge what's up on the screen. Later on down the road they can come out with the cost, unless they've made it for \$10,000 and are getting a lot of attention."

As for his outlay, Gordon said given the budget of one of the *Lord of the Rings* movies, he could have made *Her Majesty*

50 times.

Gordon, while guiding his film through the distribution process "like sending a child off to college," is now working on another movie, also a period piece.

"It's set in China and San Francisco in 1913, and is about a woman trying to bring her two sons through the Angel Island immigration station," he said.

It is to be called *Paper Son*. Gordon described it as a darkish adult drama, as fiction based on fact.

Further information about *Her Majesty* — set for an Aug. 29 release — is available on the [hermajestythemovie.com](http://hermajestythemovie.com) Web site.