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LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL

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## First-time filmmaker's 'Hottie' premieres at Los Angeles Film Festival



Anne Cusack / Los Angeles Times

**CHILLIN':** Seth Packard's "HottieBoombaLottie" will have its world premiere at the Los Angeles Film Festival.

**Seth Packard admits he wrote the film, a giddy celebration of teenage nerd love, as a vehicle for his acting career.**

By Michael Ordoña, Special to The Times  
June 21, 2008

The writer-director-producer-star of "HottieBoombaLottie" is old enough to drive, he swears.

"I'm 25; I just look 13," says Provo, Utah, native Seth Packard in the living room of a borrowed Beverly Hills apartment. "I'm living in the back of a Penske truck right now with my wife; we just moved down here a couple of days ago."

The most surprising thing here is not that he's so new to town or that the first-time filmmaker has snagged a world premiere for "Hottie" at the [Los Angeles Film Festival](#) Saturday night, but that he's old enough to marry.

Packard, who calls himself a "questioning Mormon," freely admits he wrote his debut film, a giddy celebration of teenage nerd love, as a vehicle for his acting career. Which raises the question: If one could cast himself as anything -- James Bond, Roy Hobbs, Chewbacca -- why choose Napoleon Dynamite?

"I felt like that's who I am," says the Brigham Young University graduate, who majored in philosophy and minored in business and who now sports a more sober version of the fauxhawk-Wolverine 'do he wears in the film. "In high school, I always felt out of place, like I was working so hard to win over the girl or be the cool guy."

The filmmaker says large portions of his script are lifted from his experiences, such as his character's attempt to put the smooth moves on a flower shop girl -- using the ruse of having a very sick mother -- that goes miserably awry. That one was lifted from watching a friend crash and burn.

"I was standing next to one of my best friends in a flower shop . . . I died inside," he says, laughing. "I told him, 'God, don't do it,' and he's like, 'This is gonna work, trust me.'"

Packard workshopped some of the material for "HottieBoombaLottie" (he says the title comes from local cheerleader slang for hot guys) at a Utah high school. In one drama class, he was blown away by the work of a winsome blond named Lauren McKnight -- but it wasn't until she showed up again to the film's local casting call that he got a chance to work with her again -- she was so busy pursuing acting gigs, she often missed class.

"I wrote her part based on a cousin I always had a forbidden crush on," says Packard, then realizes: "Now she's going to know I had a forbidden crush on her. Whatever. Robin, you can now know."

McKnight -- sweet, spontaneous and tough -- is one of the film's strengths. A wealth of time to finish,

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