



UP ORIGINAL MOVIE

THE TOWN THAT CAME A-COURTIN'

PREMIERES EXCLUSIVELY ON UP
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SYNOPSIS

In the UP Original Movie *The Town That Came A-Courtin'*, Abby Houston (Lauren Holly) is a smart, beautiful, successful author and fiercely independent Southern woman. When we meet her, she is curiously being kept captive in a remote cabin in the woods by an obsessed fan, Walter (Toby Hargrave). Days earlier, Abby and her publicist Jamie (Lucie Guest) were visiting the lovely town of Bliss, Mississippi on her most recent book tour. Bliss' Magnolia Blossom B&B owner Charlotte (Valerie Harper) and their well-meaning prayer chain, have big plans for Abby – as the perfect match for their widowed Mayor Spencer Alexander (Cameron Bancroft), a single dad of two. A series of collisions, several bouquets and numerous good words later, Abby relents to having dinner with Spencer, and finds a handsome, earnest man. Eagerly encouraged by the entire town, they embark on a whirlwind, public romance. But just as they are about to share a first kiss, Spencer is reminded of his late wife and abruptly pulls back. Hurt and sad, Abby is determined to leave Bliss behind, only to find her obsessed fan waiting. With phones buzzing and the town mobilized, what happens next will determine her future.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The screenplay for *The Town That Came A-Courtin'* is based on best-selling author and syndicated columnist Ronda Rich's novel and loosely based on an experience she had during a book tour. Sheryl J.

Anderson (“Charmed”) wrote the adapted script. It stars Lauren Holly (“NCIS,” “Motive”), Valerie Harper (“Mary Tyler Moore Show,” “Rhoda”), Cameron Bancroft (“24,” “Beverly Hills: 90210”) and Lucie Guest (“Heath Nutz,” “Blackstone”). The film is produced by Odyssey Media Inc. and directed by David Winning (“XIII: The Series,” “Andromeda”).

The Town That Came A-Courtin’ was filmed in Langley and the historic village of Fort Langley, British Columbia. The scenic towns have a variety of locations that were believable as the small, fictional town of “Bliss, Mississippi.” The movie was shot in 12 days in, so everyone and everything had to be in place when the director called “Rolling.”

The Town That Came A-Courtin’ is all based on Ronda Rich’s real life experience when she was on a book tour with her second novel, a memoir of her years in NASCAR, entitled *My Life in the Pits*. Ronda went to the wonderful town of Blytheville, Arkansas. The townsfolk found out that Ronda wasn’t married when she spoke at their Rotary Club. Later when Ronda got to the book signing, people were lined up out the door and up the street trying to fix her up with their eligible mayor. Ronda was so charmed by it that the experience became the basis of **The Town That Came A-Courtin’**.

In the film, bestselling author Abby Houston goes on tour with her new book “Moon Over Georgia” throughout the Southeast and winds up in this little Mississippi town called Bliss. While there, the locals try to fix her up with their widowed mayor, Spencer Alexander. The whole town gets involved. It’s a great story, and the best part of it is, that people like this really exist in Blytheville, Arkansas.

Many of the characters are inspired by people that Ronda knows. Abby is based on Ronda’s experience on a book tour. Mama is based on Ronda’s own Mama, who would say things to her that her own worst enemy wouldn’t even think of. The dog Cud Sue is based on Ronda’s dachshund Dixie Do. Jamie is based on her friend Virginia, who is in the publishing business in New York. She has a very tough exterior but a heart of gold. Charlotte is based on a lovely woman that Ronda knew in Blytheville, who owned the bookstore there.

Director David Winning says *The Town That Came A-Courtin’* was really a gift sent to him as it was “quite a surprise to be offered this movie out of the blue.” David had worked for producer Kirk Shaw seven years ago on the “Blood Ties” series for Lifetime.

David says, “Directors occasionally get lucky with a strong script and a great cast; 22 speaking parts shot over twelve days was to say the least hectic. We had to be well-planned and execute the film like a small military operation. We found our main street and the heart of the story, Bliss, Mississippi – in the sleepy suburb town of Fort Langley, British Columbia. And the find was so important because Bliss really becomes another character in the movie. Lauren Holly was exceptional to work with as always and brought her character of Abby Houston to life with bit of humor and a wink that I think audiences will really respond to.”

He adds, "It was such an absolute thrill to work with television icon Valerie Harper, who got seriously tired of us all saying 'We grew up watching you.' – but she never once stopped smiling. Valerie has an unbounded sense of optimism, both about life in general, and also with the serious health issues and challenges she's been facing so bravely. We seriously used her energizer-bunny energy to power the set. One of the most rewarding experiences I've had as a director was to watch her light up every set and every location with her infectious sense of "now". This is someone who has lived life to its fullest and richest potential every day -- long before she was ever diagnosed. And to have her be part of the Bliss family, after so many years on television was an honor for all of us, not to mention, our chance to work with a founding member of the MTM family and one of the most-loved, best-written -- and my personal favorite -- sitcoms of all time."

When Lauren Holly read the script she knew that she wanted to a part of this charming film. "The thing that attracted me to this part is that it was just a movie that made me laugh and feel good. It was just completely entertaining from page 1 to the end. It just made me feel good when I read the whole script."

Cameron Bancroft plays Spencer Alexander, the mayor of Bliss, Mississippi. He says, "Spencer has spent his whole life in Mississippi. Bliss is a beautiful small town, wonderful community and everyone is family to him. He is the father of two children Arlene, 13, and Spencer Edwards, 11, which ironically are the exact same age as my own kids in real life. Sometimes art does imitate life and this particular story has a lot of those crossovers."

We were absolutely thrilled when Valerie Harper agreed to join our cast to play the role of Charlotte. We knew that she would be perfect. Valerie was an absolute delight on set remembering every cast and crew by name. Her character Charlotte is married to the State Senator and owns the Magnolia Blossom B&B in the town of Bliss.

When Valerie read the script for ***A Town That Came A-Courtin'***, she was thrilled to know that every family member can watch this lovely family comedy. "The movie is all about a town who wants the mayor, who is a widow as his childhood sweetheart passed away and he has not dated for years. The town all get together, but sometimes they try to be too helpful, too eager. The characters are very clear. There is a real loving feeling in this movie. Everyone's heart is in the right place."

Valerie had a lot of fun playing a character with a Southern accent. She used her friend Diane Ladd for reference for the accent. Doing her research for the accent, she also watched *Mississippi Burning* and *Prom Night in Mississippi*, with Morgan Freeman. She says, "I was surprised to see when Claudia, the costume designer, had picked out outfits in gold brocade but my character Charlotte is over dressed so it works for the part. Charlotte is very candid, very honest and cares about Abby and Spencer."

Valerie and Lauren had met at charity events in the past, but this was the first opportunity that they got to work together. She also enjoyed working with director David Winning. Valerie says, “David is very calm, gives good directing even though they were shooting fast. David keeps everyone in tow. Everyone worked very hard on this film.”

After reading the script, production designer Brian Davis unifies and pulls all the elements together to come up with the look of the movie then presents the look to the director and producers for their approval. It is all-encompassing bringing together the locations, the sets, the costumes and the overall look of the movie.

Disney has a phase about starting with a clean slate they call the “blue sky phase.” The most creative part of Brian’s job is the first few weeks when he develops his ideas and hopes that it will appeal to the viewers. He wants to get the audience involved in the film by creating a romantic place so that the viewers will want to move to Bliss.

The town of Fort Langley was the perfect backdrop to create the feeling that we wanted for the town of Bliss. Charlotte’s Magnolia Blossom B & B is a fun location, very idyllic. To determine what the characters are like Brian spoke to the actors so that they feel comfortable on the set and to see if there is anything that they want on set. He showed the actors what he plans so that their character feels good in their surroundings.

The town is an essential element to the look of the movie. Brian researched small towns in Mississippi to find out what the real place might look like. He introduced lots of flowers to create a cozy place where we all would like to live. The elements included the look and feeling of the small town of welcoming Abby Houston when she arrives to Bliss. He said, “We wanted to put forth the warmth of the town.” Brian took into consideration everything from the ceiling fan to people fanning themselves to make it look like it was summer. “We wanted the look to be timeless.”

ABOUT THE CAST

LAUREN HOLLY (“ABBY HOUSTON”)

Lauren Holly is one of Hollywood’s most well-respected actors and has proven to have lasting star power with roles in some of film and televisions most noteworthy projects. Currently she stars as Dr. Betty Rogers, a medical examiner in ABC’s crime drama series, “Motive.” Lauren brings a quirky sense of humor and warmth that makes her character a standout among the terrific cast.

On the film front, Lauren will be starring as Ruth Elliott in the emotional true story *Hoovey*, which tells the story of Ruth and Jeff Elliott as they deal with their son’s battle with a life-threatening disease. In addition she will also play the female lead, Mrs. Clindeinst, in the film adaption of *Field of Lost Shoes*, a moving period piece recounting a historic battle during the Civil War.

Many know Lauren best from her three seasons as Director Jenny Shepard in the drama series "NCIS." Holly was seen in the movie *King of Texas*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's King Lear. She appeared in the miniseries "Jackie, Ethel, and Joan: Women of Camelot." Holly starred as plastic surgeon Jeremy Hanlon on Emmy® Award-nominated drama, "Chicago Hope", her second project with Kelley, following their successful collaboration on the critically acclaimed, Emmy® Award-winning series, "Picket Fences."

Holly's breakthrough motion picture performance came in the box-office smash, *Dumb and Dumber*, with Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels. Next, she received glowing reviews for her performance in the Edward Burns drama *No Looking Back*. Her numerous film credits include Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*, with Al Pacino, Cameron Diaz, and Jamie Fox, Sydney Pollack's *Sabrina*, starring Harrison Ford, the action-drama *Turbulence*, co-starring Ray Liotta, and *Beautiful Girls*.

Lauren played a lead role in the Universal production of *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* and other film credits include *A Smile Like Yours*, *The Adventures of Ford Fairlane*, *Down Periscope*, starring Kelsey Grammer, *Entropy*, and *The Last Producer*, starring and directed by Burt Reynolds.

CAMERON BANCROFT ("SPENCER ALEXANDER")

Cameron Bancroft was born in Winnipeg, Canada, but grew up in the west coast city of Vancouver, Canada. After graduating from high school, he moved to Los Angeles, California to attend California Institute of the Arts where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Theatre.

While attending Cal-Arts, Cameron performed in such productions as "The Cherry Orchard", "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Romeo and Juliet". During summer breaks from college he would head back to Canada where he played "Graham Blake" for six seasons on the long running television series "The Beachcombers". Since earning his degree in 1990 he has worked on such television shows as "Extreme", "The Cape", "Charmed", "Special Unit II", "Highlander" and "Beverly Hills 90210". Cameron's television movies include "To Walk Again – the Eddie Keating Story", "To Brave Alaska", "A Family Divided", "Convictions" and "For the Love of Nancy" and "He Sees You When You're Sleeping". He can also be seen in the feature films, "Mystery, Alaska", "Love and Human Remains", "Sleeping Together", the romantic comedy "Standard Time" and the recently released acclaimed 6 part mini-series "Little House on the Prairie" in which he plays the lead role of Charles Ingalls. Cameron plays the lead role in the soon to be released feature film "Mountain Time".

Cameron is an avid hockey fan and has been playing the game since he was five years old. He is married and has two children.

VALERIE HARPER ("CHARLOTTE")

Valerie Harper is best known for her role as Rhoda Morgenstern in the hit sitcom "The Mary Tyler Moore Show", a role that earned her three consecutive Emmy Awards and a spinoff show of her own called "Rhoda." "Rhoda" also proved a big hit, sometimes even earning better ratings than its parent show. In 1975, Harper won both the Emmy and Golden Globe Awards for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series.

Harper made her professional debut as a dancer at Radio City Music Hall. After graduating from high school, she continued at the New School for Social Research, where she took courses in French and philosophy. While still in school, she made her Broadway debut as a dancer in the musical "Li'l Abner", choreographed by the famous Michael Kidd. After that, Harper danced in a trio of other Kidd-choreographed Broadway shows: "Destry Rides Again" with Andy Griffith; "Wildcat" with Lucille Ball; and "Subways are for Sleeping" with Orson Bean. "I became what you call a 'Michael Kidd dancer,'" she once recalled. However, she turned down another chorus role in the musical "Here's Love" because, she explained, "I realized that if I was going to be an actress, I needed to not keep dancing in the chorus because you didn't get taken seriously."

Since "Rhoda" went off the air in 1978, Harper has continued in the films "Freebie and the Bean", "The Last Married Couple in America", "Blame it on Rio", starred in her own show "Valerie" and the TV movie "Mary and Rhoda." She has also appeared on numerous popular television shows, including "City", "Touched by an Angel", "Sex and the City", "That '70s Show." Most recently Valerie reunited with Mary Tyler Moore and Betty White in "Hot in Cleveland" and joins the cast of ABC's "Dancing with the Stars."

Harper returned to the place where she first made a name for herself—the stage. In 2007, she portrayed former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in a national tour of the one-person show "Golda's Balcony." And in 2010, she returned to Broadway to star as actress Tallulah Bankhead in the play "Looped," for which she was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Actress.

In January 2013, Harper received some heartbreaking news. She was diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer. Doctors gave her only a few months to live. That March, Harper shared her tragic news with People magazine. She remained upbeat despite her terminal illness, telling People that "I don't think of dying. I think of being here now."

Harper married Tony Cacciotti in 1987, and they have one daughter, Christine Cacciotti.

LUCIE GUEST ("JAMIE")

Lucie Guest was born in Victoria BC. It wasn't until Mr. Rigler's grade 5 production of his elementary school musical "The Grapevine Connection" that her passion for acting was truly ignited. During the square-dance

number, Lucie added some unscripted “yee-haws” which made the crowd go wild, and her thus her love of improv was born.

She continued to excel at the arts, booking lead roles in her high school plays and taking on leadership roles behind the scenes, such as choreographing some chorus numbers. Landing the role of Maria in her high school’s production of the Broadway musical West Side Story was one of the highlights of her earlier years.

After graduation, she moved to Vancouver B.C. to pursue acting professionally. She spent her first few years there training in classical, contemporary, and comedic theatre with Michael David Simms, Ben Ratner, Gina Chiarelli and Ivana Chubbuck. Lucie has also spent time in Los Angeles where she trained at The Edgemar Centre for the Arts, one of LA’s top acting schools. There she studied under Larry Moss, a renowned and sought-after acting teacher.

For the past two years Lucie has been studying sketch comedy and improv in Los Angeles. She has studied at The Upright Citizen’s Brigade and The Groundlings renowned school of comedy, which has launched the careers of many SNL cast.

Lucie landed her first acting job working on CBC's Television series Edgemont. Some of her earlier television credits include: Showtime's “Masters of Horror”, TNT's “Saved”, 'N' Network's “About a Girl”, and CW's “Supernatural”. Her first lead role in a feature film was opposite Chris Kattan in Miramax's “Totally Awesome”, directed by The Chappelle Show's Neal Brennan. Since then Lucie has been working non stop in television series and feature films.

IRIS QUINN (“MAMA”)

Iris Quinn was born in Amherst, Nova Scotia, and as a young child developed her love for the written word by hiding in a corner listening to her mother’s reading group which met each week to explore novels and plays. She graduated from Mount Allison University in 1973 with a degree in creative writing and English literature, and went directly into a professional theatre company, the Charlottetown Festival. She has had a flourishing career as a stage and film actor, director, and as a voice-over specialist working in Boston, Toronto, Halifax, and now in Vancouver, where she happily resides with her husband Fred Henderson, who is also an actor.

In 2002, she was appointed as faculty guest artist at the University of British Columbia. Iris derives great pleasure from working with, and mentoring young actors. She also offers audition and on set coaching, as well as a service to link actors to agents called Shop Your Chops. She runs her own studio called Impact, in which she coaches and tapes actors for auditions. Many of her clients have booked major roles from her taping facility.

In 2013 Iris completed a life-long goal of creating a cookbook. Here she melds her passion for the culinary arts, teaching, and for writing.

Her blended family consists of two step children Mike Henderson, a paramedic, and Jes Henderson, a yoga instructor, and her own son Joey Quinn, who is a professional glass artist. With grown children and a beautiful family life in place, Iris can now fully realize all the joys of her exciting and varied careers.

TOBY HARGRAVE (“WALTER”)

Described as “a happy Hagrid” (for his more than passing resemblance to the Harry Potter chum) comedian Toby Hargrave shares the character’s imposing physical presence as well as his colossal warmth. Audiences are drawn in (if never completely put at ease) by Hargrave’s humble charm and unwaveringly honest comedy.

A gifted storyteller with an absurd ability to pinpoint the unseen hilarity of life, Hargrave has captivated audiences for over 20 years. Credits include appearances at the Just for Laughs Comedy Festival in Montreal, Atomic Comedy Festival in Washington State, Whistler & Edmonton Comedy Festivals, Vancouver International Comedy Festival, where he was award title of “Funniest Comedian in Vancouver”.

Starting in his home town of Edmonton Alberta, Toby has performed at The Comedy Store, Improv, Laugh Shop, Yuk Yuks, Laugh Factory, Hermosa Comedy Magic Club, Jon Lovitz Comedy Club and continues to enthrall audiences across North American with his incredible ability to connect with diverse crowds and relate his unique comedic perspective.

CAMERON GRIERSON (“STEVE MARSHALL”)

Cameron began acting in theatre at the age of eight. He juggled his interests in theatre with a rigorous schedule as a competitive swimmer throughout high school, and later earned a bachelor’s degree in Media and Theatre Arts from Montana State University. After ten years working with Writers, Directors, and Producers, he returned to his first love with a small role in “Underworld Awakening” in 2011. Since then he’s been busy acting in commercials and independent films. He’s excited to play Steve Marshall in “The Town That Came A-Courtin’” because not only is it his first role in a TV movie, it’s also the fulfillment of a long held dream to appear onscreen with Lauren Holly.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION TEAM

DAVID WINNING (DIRECTOR)

With 14 features, 25 television series and over 100 TV credits, David is mainly known for his work on Gene Roddenberry’s “Andromeda,” MGM’s “Stargate: Atlantis”, ABC’s “Dinotopia” and the HBO thriller “Exception to The Rule”, starring Kim Cattrall, Sean Young and Eric McCormack. A proven and prolific director of films and many television series in virtually all genres – he was a dreamer kid from the Canadian prairies, making

movies at the age of ten with a Super 8 camera in hometown Calgary, Canada. At 18, he got a grant to make his first sixteen-millimeter drama *Sequence*, and expanded the plotline into his first feature film *Storm*, produced on a shoestring in the summer of 1983 and filmed in the forests and hills of Alberta.

At 27, he landed directing gigs on the Canadian-produced “Friday the 13th: The Series” for Paramount Pictures; for this television debut he received three Canadian Emmy Award nominations. His second feature followed in 1992 with “Killer Image”, a plot-twisting photographic mystery-thriller starring Michael Ironside and veteran character actor M. Emmet Walsh.

Throughout the 1990’s and the 2000’s he directed more movies and episodes of over twenty series from kid’s shows to westerns to science-fiction. M. Night Shyamalan has cited Winning’s episode of Nickelodeon’s “Are You Afraid of the Dark: The Tale of the Dream Girl”, as the inspiration for *The Sixth Sense*. His episodic work has received international awards including twenty-four first places at the Houston Film Festival, a Gold Hugo and two Silver Hugos in Chicago, and Four national Gemini nominations for Best Director/Dramatic Series. He has received over 70 international awards.

In 2002 he received a National award from the Director’s Guild for outstanding achievement in television drama. In the 90’s arriving in LA, he directed the hit sequel “Turbo: A Power Ranger Movie” for 20th Century Fox – and it was the 4th highest selling video in August that summer. He directs in many countries: Scotland, Hungary, Canada and is soon to be working in India and Thailand. He has directed many international stars including: Daniel Baldwin, Patrick Duffy, Peter Strauss, William Devane, Peta Wilson, Markie Post, Lance Henriksen, Frederic Forrest, Jason Connery, Carl Weathers, Margot Kidder, Michael Sarrazin, Bruce Boxleitner, Lesley Ann Warren, Martin Mull and of course, the Power Rangers and many more.

Most recently, in one year—Winning directed Kevin Sorbo, Robert Englund and Bruce Dern in a Trilogy of monster movies for the US SYFY Channel and Hallmark Entertainment - RHI Films New York – as well as episodes of the Vampire series *Blood Ties* for Lifetime TV. He directed episodes of the cult-hit series “Todd and the Book of Pure Evil”, a rock ‘n roll, comedy-horror series for Space Channel and “Lost Girl” and “XIII” with Stuart Townsend for Showcase and the Syfy Channel and the multi-cam live audience series “Mr. Young” for the Disney Channel. David is thrilled to be directing the heart-warming romantic comedy “The Town That Came A-Courtin’ for UP.

RONDA RICH (AUTHOR)

Ronda Rich, best-selling author and syndicated columnist, first exploded on the national stage over a decade ago with the wildly successful *What Southern Women Know (That Every Woman Should)*, a book now in its 32nd printing. The popularity of that book launched her as a storyteller who rivets audiences - both as a speaker and a writer - with tales of the South as seen through the eyes of its people.

Her latest book, *There's A Better Day A-Comin'*, is a personal accounting of dozens of people - famous and non-famous - who triumphed over tribulation and setbacks to push through adversity and find a better day. Uplifting and encouraging, each provocative story has a prevailing theme: No matter how hard times get, a better day always comes again. Always.

As was the case with two other of her books, *There's A Better Day A-Comin'* was the subject of an auction among several publishers bidding for the right to publish such a timely, inspiring tome. She is also the author of the best-selling *What Southern Women Know About Faith*, *What Southern Women Know About Flirting*, *My Life in The Pits* (a critically acclaimed memoir of her years in NASCAR racing as a reporter and publicist) and the novel, *The Town That Came A-Courtin'*, which will be a television movie for January 2014. It stars Lauren Holly and the much beloved Valerie Harper.

A former award-winning sports writer, Ronda returned to her newspaper roots in 2003 with a self-syndicated column which appears in over fifty newspapers. Alternating between humorous, sentimental and wise, she delivers a punch of Southern life weekly to over a million readers who revel in a story well told, one that often is entwined with a moral or lesson learned.

She has appeared on dozens of television shows including "The View," "Fox and Friends," "The Other Half," Fox Sports, CNN as well as in the pages of *People*, *USA Today*, *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Southern Living* and *Woman's Own*.

Ronda and her husband, John Tinker, an Emmy® award-winning television drama producer and writer, live in the countryside outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

CREDITS

UP presents an
Odyssey Media Inc. production

Cast

Lauren Holly

Cameron Bancroft

Iris Quinn

Cameron Grieson

Toby Hargrave

Lucie Guest

With a Special Appearance by

Valerie Harper

Executive Produced by

Kirk Shaw

Stan Spry

Rich Middlemas

Mary Beth Sparrows

Eric Andrews

Directed by

David Winning

Screenplay by

Sheryl J. Anderson

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