

Liam MacDonald walking the red carpet

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

?'It's hard to get into the routine of hanging out with friends,' Liam MacDonald remarked after his year of acting on stage, in films and television series.

'Normal becomes a different normal. When Hope Calls starts on the Hallmark Movies Now Network digital streaming service' last Friday, August 30.

That is a new series, a spin-off from When Calls the Heart, filmed in Powassan, Ontario.

It's a wholesome, family series.

Ready or Not, the movie in which Liam played a member of the fictional La Domas family, premiered in L.A. in August and is a whole other matter, an R-rated horror film.

However the experience was serious enough: 'It was a new experience. I've never done a feature film, a horror movie; never worked with fake blood; it's like a red dye corn syrup and bananas.'

He and his mother, Liz MacDonald, decided to go to L.A for the premiere, but they had to pay their own way there.

Said Ms. MacDonald, 'We decided this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. He's worked really hard and he had the money. They only paid for the leads to come to the red carpet. So, we went on our own bill.'

'I never thought I'd get there and I'm so grateful,' Liam told the Citizen. 'I don't want to stop now. As long as I'm chipper and wanting to do it, I think [my agent] will stand by that.'

As his mother explained, 'It was filmed in Oshawa. The company paid for travel and accommodation and they paid whoever is chaperoning him; hotels, meals, travel while he was acting in it. It was only the trip to L.A., for the premiere they didn't pay.'

'The best thing about doing it would have to be the people I met. Ninety-nine percent of the actors and the crew I got to work with were really nice. I've made so many amazing friendships,' Liam said.

'At the premiere of Ready or Not, I met a lot of adults I didn't know very well. Even this series, there are actors I don't know. In film, you just didn't have the time. I certainly made friends. You meet so many different people. Age doesn't seem to matter.'

When asked, he commented humorously, 'The big difference between Mirvish [Fun House] and Hollywood ? Mirvish didn't provide me with lunch, but it was a lot of fun because there were chances to meet a lot of people.'

Of the attitudes on the part of the film industry, much like his early days at Theatre Orangeville, 'Everyone is treated like a professional. Everyone was just trying to get in the last of it. I don't have to go to university for this. If it becomes a profession, I'll be really happy.'

He considered, 'Maybe I'll go to university to study architecture or engineering. I didn't expect anything of acting; this is really lucky.'

Ms. MacDonald added, 'Liam's agent told us, a lot of kids drop off. Some return later. Just because he's having this, doesn't mean he'll always be there.'

We joked about him going to a local movie house to see Ready or Not and people recognizing him and wanting his autograph.

'When I was at the premiere, there was a lot of people wanted my autograph. Someone came up to me and said, 'Can you sign it [his program]?' I didn't know what to write. So, I just made a big flourish for my name.'

He added, 'I have nothing planned for this year. We're wrapping up two TV series and another short film that I'm wrapping up.'

Next for Liam is grade nine at Westside Secondary School.

'I'm kinda hoping, for the first few weeks I definitely hope to not talk about the movie which is R-rated.'

Horror that it is, Ready or Not is a black comedy, so over-the-top that Liam says of it, 'My character does some pretty horrible stuff but it's definitely a funny film, not meant to be taken too seriously. Everybody can just laugh at what the film does.'

During filming, school is on and off, which brought the comment, 'I'd like to be entirely at school for the first semester. I think it'd be great to actually be there.'

Having said which, 'I don't think I'm at the point where I can turn down other roles, however.'

'My characters have been nine or 10 years old. In Ready or Not, I play a 10-year-old.'

For the moment, 'I can definitely do that normal life. I will sign up for [school] activities.'

'As his mom,' Ms. MacDonald chipped in, 'I can say Liam thinks he can do everything. Ultimately, we've had to make difficult decisions but we've had to make them.'

Liam added, 'When I do book jobs, I'll book them at the most inconvenient time if ever I do get bored...'

'After Fun Home,' his mother related, 'Liam was feeling burnt out. The show was very demanding and he needed a bit of a break. This isn't his career. It was a hobby but it has become full-time.'

'Especially when I pulled out of team sports,' Liam conceded, 'I missed out of hockey and baseball. There were sacrifices I had to make but it was worth it.'

We talked a bit about the differences between acting in film and in theatre.

Said Liam, 'Collaboration is not so much in film. It's mostly to a schedule: come in, act and leave. Theatre actors can voice their input.'

'In film, mostly directors are open to listening to the actors but I think there is less of the creative process there.'

'There can be a hundred people there [on the set],' Ms. MacDonald contributed, 'you can't know what they're all doing or who they all are.'

Now, at 14 years old, Liam has advice for young actors: 'Young people, don't doubt yourself. I never thought I was that good of an actor. Never say, 'I can never do this.' To everyone, I say, believe in yourself. And it's fun.'

He laid it down: 'Do what you're passionate about and see what happens. When I signed with an agent, I thought, we'll see; I'm not as good as others. When we started booking, I had more confidence in myself and bookings came.'

?Then I thought, Maybe I am a good actor.?

One thing is for sure, Liam's star is certainly rising.