



Gooding back to high school

By Gregg Goldstein

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CANNES -- Cuba Gooding Jr. will produce and is attached to star in "Harold," an edgy teen comedy produced and financed by Danny Fisher's City Lights Pictures and Morris S. Levy of M.E.G.A Films.

In a separate development, City Lights CEO Danny Fisher announced here in Cannes Thursday that he has signed a distribution agreement with Montreal-based Canadian distributor VVS Films for City Lights' produced and acquired feature film, television, documentary and special interest programming in Canada.

Projects in City Lights' distribution pipeline covered by the agreement include "Harold" as well as David Wain's comedy "The Ten," the Alec Baldwin starrer "Brooklyn Rules" and the Rosario Dawson starrer "Descent." City Lights has a distribution deal with WEA Corp. for video and digital distribution in the U.S.

"Harold" revolves around the title character, a premature balding young teen trying to adapt to a new high school. Gooding will play the school janitor who befriends and helps him through merciless teasing. Veteran "Saturday Night Live" writer T. Sean Shannon will make his directorial debut from a script written by him and Greg Fields. "It's in the vein of 'Napoleon Dynamite'," said Levy. His M.E.G.A and City Lights teamed to produce "The Ten," and sold North American rights to ThinkFilm and City Lights Home Entertainment for \$4.5 million at January's Sundance Film Festival. They also produced the stark drama "Descent," starring and produced by Rosario Dawson.

The film will shoot in August in New York, aiming for a PG-13 rating, and producers are hoping to finish production in time for submission to Sundance. William Sherak of production co. Blue Star brought the project to Levy's attention, and both agreed Gooding was a good fit for the film.

The executive producers are Sam Zietz, City Lights CEO Fisher and Maxwell Sinovoi. Jason Shuman and William Sherak will produce for Blue Star. Michael Califra will co-executive produce for City Lights.

Attorney Steven Beer of Greenberg Traurig represented M.E.G.A and Blue Star in the deal. City Lights executive vp business affairs Mark Ragone represented his company. Gooding is repped by CAA, Michael Rosenberg of 3 Arts Entertainment and Ralph Brescia of Bloom Hergott Cook Diemer & Klein.