

## STARLOG's "THE LAST AIRBENDER" set visit: Jackson Rathbone

Written by Allan Dart  
Friday, 02 July 2010 15:09

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To TWILIGHT fans, he's Jasper Hale. To LAST AIRBENDER viewers, though, he's Sokka, the Water Tribe member who goes on a journey with his sister Katara (Nicola Peltz) to help the titular avatar.

Rathbone's Sokka is different than his cartoon counterpart. He's more grounded, and while there is some humor to him, he isn't the comic relief on view in the animated series. In addition to the trek he and his sister take, Sokka's character also undergoes an emotional journey when he meets Princess Yue (Seychelle Gabriel) and falls in love with her.

STARLOG: How did you get this part?

RATHBONE: Night just approached me, and they were like, "You're going to audition for this movie called THE LAST AIRBENDER." I said, "That sounds familiar," and they told me it was based on a show, and I replied, "Nice, I know that one." I originally auditioned for Zuko, waited six months, didn't hear anything, figured I didn't get it, and then I got a call back asking to audition for Sokka. I was surprised. I like doing comedy as well, and to have that kind of range with this character—he grows a lot throughout the series—is great.



STARLOG: What was your first day of shooting like?

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RATHBONE: I think the first day in Greenland we shot the opening, which is fantastic, because most of the time you have to start in the middle. We went to Greenland for two weeks and we shot a lot of the beginning of the film up there. It was cold, and it was nice to get back to warmer weather, because we were wet most of the time, and it was freezing. They would dump water down on me, and by the time the take was done, the water was already frozen on my head.

STARLOG: One of the major themes in the animated series is family. How much is that a part of your character and this film?

RATHBONE: I have a 14-year-old sister, so I'm used to family pictures and having my family around, which is nice, because so much of this movie is about family and the ways they relate. Sokka and Katara are brother and sister, trying to save the world together. And then you have Zuko, who's not a bad guy, just in a bad situation, doing bad things to try and gain his father's approval.

STARLOG: Once you found out that they wanted you for Sokka, what eventually drew you to the character?

RATHBONE: I love the character. He's got a warrior's heart, but not necessarily the skill. It grows though. I have lots of fight scenes, which is one of my favorite things to do. I get to kick people around and I get paid to do it, but my favorite part of it is the extremes of the character. He gets into situations that are pretty funny, like a tiff with his sister, and then there are serious situations. It's a lot of comedy, drama and fight scenes. The film involves all these things as an actor that you want to portray.

STARLOG: How have you had to prepare for the fight sequences?

RATHBONE: As the films progress, my character becomes more of a fighter; he starts fighting with swords. I've been doing stickfighting to prepare. They're sticks, so they're not sharp, but it's been a lot of fun. I like the idea of coming away with four months of kung fu training. As an actor you get to do these things; it's like wearing new shoes. I've been wearing the same boots for four years, so it's nice to step into something else for a while. We've been doing lots of training,

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and it hasn't let up.



STARLOG: Now on to that little-known franchise you're a part of... Even though Stephenie Meyer's books were bestsellers at the time you shot the first TWILIGHT, the films weren't the phenomena that they are today.

RATHBONE: [The first TWILIGHT] was kind of like a bigger budget indie film; it felt like an indie film. There was a very fun vibe on set. It was a little stressful because as we were filming the press and fans got more into it, but it was amazing. We realized, "Oh wow, this is going to be something else." I mean, it wasn't coming out for six months, and people already wanted to buy tickets! So that was an experience in and of itself. I wasn't really prepared for it, but I am thankful for it. [I've done plays where] everybody on stage outnumbers everyone in the audience, so it's really nice to have an audience.

STARLOG: [This on-set interview took place in summer of 2009] How has TWILIGHT: NEW MOON been a different experience?

RATHBONE: We have a bigger budget, but the nice thing is we're delving more into the story and the characters. As the films progress, we're getting deeper into the mythical world, with the werewolves and what the whole vampire legacy is. In the first film, we were exploring [that world] a little bit, pacing it out, and then in the next one we'll go further, see a little deeper and deeper into the world and the story each time. That's the beauty of being in a franchise, rolling with the story and seeing how the characters develop.

STARLOG: What was it like having the first film's director Catherine Hardwicke being replaced

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in ECLIPSE by Chris Weitz?

**RATHBONE:** When we got back after the first one, it was like a family reunion, as if we'd only been gone for a month instead of a year. Besides a new director, nothing really changed that much; it was just a different vibe. It was great. We simply wanted to come together and make another film for the fans.

**STARLOG:** You've been a busy man as of late, especially considering your TWILIGHT commitment.

**RATHBONE:** I love being busy. I like to keep working as much as possible. I like to work 20 hours a day, and then sleep four. I work all day on a film, and then I go home and rehearse with my band all night. My band is called 100 Monkeys. It's old-school rock and roll, all originals, blues- and funk- oriented. We like to have a funk show, and make music that people can dance to.

I'm producing my first film, GIRLFRIEND, with a new director, Justin Lerner, who made a splash with a short film at a couple festivals last year. My bandmate and I are producing it with my production company and his production company. It's exciting and cool to have a little more say behind the camera. I love film. I love the art behind it. I think it's an incredible collaboration that requires a lot of different ideas, a lot of different people, a lot of collaboration, and that's what attracted me to the art of making movies. You have all these people coming together to create this two-hour dream that takes you out of your normal life while you sit in a theater and get sucked into this screen, into this world—especially with these franchises. I wake up everyday and just thank god I'm alive.

{comments on}