



# ***AGENT CODY BANKS: DESTINATION LONDON***

## **Production Notes**

*Saving the world...again.* Frankie Muniz returns as super-cool spy Cody Banks in the action-packed family comedy *Agent Cody Banks: Destination London*.

In Cody's new adventure, a rogue CIA agent (and Cody's own instructor) has stolen a top secret mind-control device from the U.S. government. With worldwide security at stake, Cody has to go undercover in London to get it back. "Over the pond" and in hot water, Cody is forced to pose as a student at an elite music boarding school and keep the other kids from discovering his true identity, all while infiltrating covert hideouts, tracking his target – and practicing the clarinet. To help him on his mission, Cody is assigned a new handler: a wisecracking CIA reject named Derek (Anthony Anderson) who's desperately trying to get back into the Agency's good graces. He's supposed to be posing as the boarding school chef, but unfortunately he has no idea how to cook.

As things get more difficult (and more fun!), the duo finds surprise help from a fellow student named Emily (Hannah Spearritt), a hip, beautiful British Secret Service counterpart to Cody's CIA teen. Together they're on a madcap journey above, below, and around London to retrieve the mind-control device and keep from getting caught – and with them on the loose, God save the Queen! Packed with comedy, all-new gadgets, and tight new martial arts moves, Cody ultimately has to face and fight the toughest enemy possible – the very man who taught him everything he knows.

MGM Pictures is proud to present *Agent Cody Banks: Destination London*, a Bob Yari, Maverick Films, Dylan Sellers production starring Frankie Muniz, Anthony Anderson, Cynthia

Stevenson, Daniel Roebuck, Hannah Spearritt, and Keith David. Directed by Kevin Allen from a screenplay by Don Rhymer and story by Harald Zwart & Dylan Sellers and Rhymer (based on the characters created by Jeffrey Jurgensen), the film was produced by Dylan Sellers, Guy Oseary, David C. Glasser, Bob Yari, and David Nicksay. The talented production team includes director of photography Denis Crossan, production designer Richard Holland, and editor Andrew MacRitchie, with music by Mark Thomas. *Agent Cody Banks: Destination London* was executive produced by Danny Gold, Michael Jackman, Andreas Klein, Mark Morgan, Madonna, Jason Alexander, Jennifer Birchfield-Eick, and Kerry David.

## **BACK TO BANKS**

In his previous mission, Cody Banks (Frankie Muniz) went undercover as a high school student to get close to fellow student Natalie Connors (Hilary Duff) – and filmgoing youngsters went crazy for Cody and his comic adventures. Kids young and old had a great time watching Cody outsmart the bad guys, and they really responded to Cody’s main predicament: to have to act like a typical teenager while saving the world and keeping his family from finding out he’s a spy. Released on March 14, 2003, audiences showed their approval by making *Agent Cody Banks* a hit, but the filmmakers, stars, and MGM weren’t surprised by the film’s success – with positive test audience response and early buzz on the film, a sequel was already in the works before the first *Cody* was even released.

Producer Dylan Sellers feels it’s the premise behind *Agent Cody Banks* that helped make it such a success. “I think the fantasy of being a kid secret agent is a pretty compelling idea for kids,” says Sellers. “It’s right up there with being a princess or race car driver or something – it’s exciting, unusual, and very empowering. Cody gets to do things most of us would only dream of, which is made all the more exhilarating by the fact he’s a teenager.”

Producer David Nicksay agrees, but he feels kids also responded with such enthusiasm because, even though he’s racing cars and saving the world, Cody’s a lot like them. “Cody is an all-American, every day kid,” he says. “Everybody can understand where he’s coming from. He has homework, he has school problems, he has family issues – but he’s actually more capable than most adults. That’s what makes him spectacular.”

In putting together a sequel, the filmmakers quickly decided they wanted to give Cody new territory to explore. Not only did Cody need a fresh villain to defeat, but by putting him in a

foreign environment the filmmakers would be able to up the stakes and give Cody a different set of obstacles to overcome. London provided the perfect backdrop. With Big Ben, Parliament, Buckingham Palace, old English mansions, the London Eye, and a variety of other locations in the background, Cody and his cohorts had a new environment to explore. With its age-old majesty and history, grand old England becomes another character in the film.

The filmmakers transplanted the action across the ocean, but they also wanted to bend the film's genre a bit. The first film explored the spy scenario, with plenty of action and James Bond-esque intrigue. But in listening to audience response, the filmmakers discovered that people also really enjoyed the comedic aspects of the journey. In formulating the sequel, the filmmakers wanted to keep the action while making comedy an even bigger part of the film.

“What will make *Agent Cody Banks: Destination London* as appealing, if not more appealing than the first one, is that it's really funny,” says Sellers. “The first one obviously did very well or we wouldn't be making a second. But there was a lot of emphasis on visual action, and in some areas I think we could have focused more on comedy. We were very intent on emphasizing comedy in *Destination London*. There's still a lot of action and a lot of gadgets and a lot of very cool stuff, but there's much, much more comedy.”

Star Frankie Muniz says, “In the first movie, there wasn't nearly as much comedy as there is in this movie.” He echoes the filmmakers' sentiments when he says, “We found out from the first one that people wanted more comedy, so we definitely give it to them in this one. That's why we have Anthony Anderson in this movie; everyone's going to laugh at his character and all the things he does.”

To help usher in “the funny” and put a distinctly British stamp on Cody's new escapades, the filmmakers hired English director Kevin Allen to helm *Destination London*. “I really liked Kevin's movie *The Big Tease*,” says Sellers. “I thought it was really funny, and when we met, he just made us laugh.” After bringing Allen aboard and beginning to discuss the film with him, the filmmakers knew they'd made the right choice; he really understood what needed to be done. “This guy gets it,” adds Sellers. “He really got what this film needed to be, and his ideas were really good.”

Producer David Nicksay adds that Allen really helped create a creative atmosphere on set, fostering a truly collaborative process of filmmaking that ended up working very nicely. “Kevin had an idea every minute,” Nicksay says. “He's like an improvisational comedian behind the camera – he gets a new idea and he'll zoom right in there.”

## **BACK AS BANKS**

Everyone involved knew there wouldn't be another *Agent Cody Banks* without Cody himself, but acclaimed young actor (and Emmy nominee) Frankie Muniz was thrilled to step into Cody's spy shoes once again. "I loved filming the first one," says Muniz. "When they told me they were going to do a second one I was extremely excited." Because of Muniz's *Malcolm in the Middle* schedule, the production couldn't waste any time; they had to make sure they were ready to film *Destination London* during Muniz's hiatus from *Malcolm* between seasons. Fortunately, all the pieces fell into place, and Muniz was off to London to film on location in one of the world's most fascinating cities.

Cody is different this time out; he's not such a rookie, and it was important to Muniz to show that his character had developed. "In *Destination London*, Cody is more 'business as usual' towards his job; he's more assured and confident," says Muniz. "All the other junior spies look up to him, and Cody's kind of cocky, in a way." He gets a reality check very quickly, however, when his own instructor escapes from the Camp Woody training facility with a top secret mind-control program. Cody faces a greater set of challenges in the sequel and has to rely on everything he's learned in addition to preparing himself for a whole new set of conflicts.

To perform the more complex stunts and action sequences called for in the new film, Muniz had to prepare himself as well. He'd worked very hard to get in shape and train for the first film; since it wasn't so long between the first and second films, Muniz was ready to go again after a few weeks of "refreshment" training. It was very important to Muniz that he do as many of his own stunts as possible. "The stunts, the training, things exploding, fight scenes – that's part of the fun of doing an action movie and being an actor who can do that stuff," he says. "I got confident during the first movie because of all the fight stuff, but I still had to be good. I had to practice and work out with trainers for a month and a half before I started filming this movie." Muniz worked with a personal karate coach and learned more and more each lesson. "Then when you're actually filming, you don't even have to think about the choreography," he says. "You just kick high because you've trained and you're so excited, and it feels very real. It's really cool.

"There's a big chase scene in the film where I go running onto this construction site, grab these bars that are being hoisted into the air by a crane, and I get lifted up and over this big

explosion,” Muniz continues. “It’s always fun to film stunts like that because it’s like, ‘Who in the world would ever get to do this?’ They’re getting ready to blow up all this stuff and film it and everyone’s stepping away and closing their ears – and there’s me right in the middle of it! It’s great.”

Muniz thinks his stunt work may come in handy one day, too. “Once I’m done acting, once nobody wants me anymore,” he laughs, “I’m definitely going to become a stunt man or stunt driver or something like that because it’s so much fun.”

Another aspect of the Cody movies that Muniz really enjoys are the tools of Cody’s trade: the gadgets. *Destination London* doesn’t disappoint in that department either. “There are crazy gadgets,” Muniz says. “There are Mentos candies – if I lick and stick them on something it will make a mini-explosion. There’s also a retainer I can put in my mouth and it acts as a high-powered eavesdropping device. I can use my tongue to tune in and listen to things. It’s really exciting.”

## **CODY’S CO-STAR**

With Cody leaving the good ol’ U.S. of A. for London, the filmmakers decided he would also need a new handler. To increase the comedy quotient, they wanted to find someone who would provide a perfect comic foil to Muniz’s Banks. They found the right guy in actor and comedian Anthony Anderson.

To put it mildly, Anderson’s Derek Bowman isn’t the most accomplished CIA operative. “The funny thing about playing Derek,” Anderson says, “is that he’s an outcast from the CIA, a black sheep condemned to the backwaters of London. He’s his own boss; he’s not regularly into anything or has to answer to anyone. He gets no real cases in London...until now! That’s what’s really great about playing Derek; he just gets to have fun. There are no limits to what Derek would or wouldn’t do.”

Derek’s irreverent London demeanor is even evident in his choice of vehicles. No Bond-style Aston Martin for him: “Derek took one of those distinctive black London cabs and tricked it out,” Anderson says. “It’s all leather, Gucci interior, plasma screen television – he has the best sound system in all of England.”

Anderson was first approached about doing *Agent Cody Banks: Destination London* while on a studio lot minding his own business. “Dylan Sellers was driving by on a golf cart and

I was driving by in my truck. He slammed on the breaks and was like ‘Anthony Anderson!’ and I just stopped. I thought he was some deranged fool,” Anderson laughs. Sellers told Anderson he wanted him to be in the Cody sequel; it had just arrived in theatres, but Anderson hadn’t seen the first one yet. He took his kids to the film the next day and knew it was a world he’d like to be a part of.

“I really enjoyed the first one,” Anderson continues. “It’s a kid-friendly movie and a family film. I’m very conscious of some of the work I do with regards to my family. I think, ‘Can I bring my kids and sit and watch this?’ I’m able to do that with this film, so that really attracted me to it.” A few short months later, Anderson was in London with Frankie Muniz.

In speaking of his young co-star, Anderson is quick to point out that he and Frankie are friends as well as colleagues – they’ve even sat together at Clipper games. “We have a lot of fun,” he says. “He’s my buddy. I think he’s immensely talented and I’m happy to be a part of this with him.”

In addition to working with Frankie, Anderson also enjoyed collaborating with director Kevin Allen. “Kevin allowed us a lot of freedom, and I really love it when you work with a director like that,” Anderson says. “As long as we stayed within parameters and conveyed the message that needed to be conveyed within a scene, he let us bounce off the wall and have fun. If we got too big, he brought us back in and chopped the rough edges so it’s smooth. It was a great relationship.”

Frankie Muniz had to do the bulk of the stunts for the film, but Anderson didn’t escape entirely unscathed. One of his biggest scenes was an elaborate chase through London on a really tiny motorbike, and Anderson did much of the driving himself. “I crashed the motorcycle once in rehearsal trying to figure out what I could and couldn’t do on the bike,” he laughs. “I found out what I couldn’t do real fast. I had a ball.” Like Muniz, Anderson looked at the stunts as one of the more fun aspects of making the film. “When you can get up and do your own stunts – ride down stairs and ride up ramps on a motorized vehicle attached to nothing – when you’re in control of that, it really gets the blood and the heart pumping.”

Of his new co-star, Muniz says, “Since day one, Anthony and I have been really close. We’ve been very comfortable with each other, and I think that’s the way it is on camera, too – just very real in a sense.” Of course, even though they got along as friends, working with Anderson wasn’t always easy. “Anthony’s so funny,” Muniz says, “it’s actually hard to act with

him sometimes, especially when he's improvising – it's hard not to laugh. He's always adlibbing, and it's hilarious.”

### **CATCH THE SPEARRIT**

A spy guy wouldn't be a spy guy without a spy girl: the filmmakers also needed a smart, sassy female counterpart to fill out the *Cody 2* trio. Since the production was moving to London, they created the role of Emily, Cody's British Secret Service counterpart, and began the task of looking for an English actress to play the part. They decided on the multi-talented Hannah Spearrit; the actress is relatively new to film, but she's already incredibly famous internationally for her participation in the smash British pop group S Club 7.

After auditioning for the filmmakers, Spearrit heard she'd won the role two days later – but only thanks to her parents. “I'd lost my phone,” she laughs, “so they couldn't get in contact with me! It was my dad who told me I'd gotten the job because they managed to get through to him.”

She was thrilled to get the part. “I was extremely excited,” she continues. “I've always wanted to be in films so this was great for me, and it was great timing having just finished my previous job.”

Spearrit had heard of *Malcolm in the Middle*, but she hadn't seen the television show until she came to the United States before auditioning. “I became a massive fan,” she says. She finally got to meet Muniz in person when she came into MGM to screen-test for the role. She knew instantly that Muniz would be a great person to work with. “Frankie's very down to earth,” she says, “really professional and really good to work with.”

Emily is a very strong and stimulating role; she's very powerful in her way, and Spearrit was glad to get to play a girl with such strength and moxie. “When you first meet Emily, she's basically a normal girl doing normal things,” she says. “Later on in the film, however, you discover there's more to her than meets the eye.” Lucky for audiences, Spearrit insists on keeping the rest a secret.

Overall, Muniz sums up his feelings on the *Cody* sequel by saying, “I think every kid in the entire world dreams about being Cody Banks or James Bond, being a secret agent. They get to spy around and have the cool gadgets and save the world and drive the cool cars – all that kind

of stuff. Cody Banks is just like the coolest kid – he beats up these adults and he gets to do all this crazy stuff kids dream about. I think that’s why a lot of kids enjoy watching the movie.

“I have actually met a few kids,” Muniz continues, “and their parents have said, ‘All they do is play Agent Cody Banks; they run around and pretend to be spies.’ That’s really cool. Hopefully even more people will go and see this one, because it’s definitely a lot bigger and funnier.”

## **LONDON CALLING**

Not only did the actors and filmmakers enjoy making *Agent Cody Banks: Destination London*; they also enjoyed exploring one of the most colorful and rich cities in the world. “We had a great time in London,” says Muniz. “It was very different for me, but it was wonderful seeing all the new places. We were filming in all the big touristy spots, so I got to see it all.”

Muniz made sure to soak up some British culture while he was there. “I saw a lot of theatre – mostly American plays where the British people have American accents,” he laughs. “Incredible actors, though. I didn’t hear their British accents at all.”

The fact that the film was shooting in London was one of the selling points for Anthony Anderson. “What made it exciting was that it was being shot entirely on location,” he says. “It’s rare for actors to get to travel abroad to make films like this, so I jumped at the opportunity.”

Producer Nicksay feels the London setting enhanced the flavor of the entire movie. “Cody gets to come out into an exciting, vibrant and unusual new world for him,” he says. “It opens his eyes. In doing a sequel you have to take the character and put him in a new environment – he faces new challenges and you can watch the character grow through those new adventures. We get to sit on Cody’s shoulder and look at the world through his eyes – and we can discover it anew as well.”