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Framingham native returned to town to prep for Boondock Saints sequel

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Brian Mahoney, who grew up in Framingham, plays Boston Police Detective Duffy in "The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day," which hit the big screen on Oct. 30. (Courtesy: Brian Mahoney's MySpace)

By Matt Rocheleau, Globe Correspondent

It's not uncommon for Brian Mahoney to return to Framingham, drive through his hometown, stop by a local bar to grab a drink and watch whichever of Boston's sports team is playing on TV that night.

But one of his most recent visits was more than just a casual stay. Mahoney was preparing for the biggest role of his Hollywood acting career so far — as a co-star in the sequel to "The Boondock Saints," a crime thriller film set in Boston and released in 1999 that has since gained a cult following.

Returning to Framingham prior to the filming of "The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day," which hit theaters Oct. 30, Mahoney wanted to recapture the natural Boston accent he had grown up with in his youth, but, like others, had lost touch with after years of living in other parts of the country. The accent is a critical component of Mahoney's part as Detective Duffy of the Boston Police Department, but Duffy's role in the second Boondock Saints film is much bigger than it was in the first.

And, even after having not called New England home for nearly 40 years, Mahoney could still talk the talk.

"If you grow up there and you got it, you know it forever. It comes back to you. It's like riding a bike," he said of his local accent in a phone interview Thursday from where he lives now, in Los Angeles.

Mahoney said he wanted to avoid botching the accent the way some actors did in the 2006 Oscar-winning Martin Scorsese film, "The Departed," which is also set in Boston.

"Everyone thinks you just have to drop your 'Rs' at the end of words, and talk like 'pahk the kah in Hahvahd Yahd,'" he said. "But people don't realize the 'O' is so important."

For instance, he said, in "The Departed," Martin Sheen's character Captain O'neenan of the Boston State Police says con three different ways in one scene

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question of the Boston State Police says cop three different ways in one scene. Mahoney noted how he thinks Sheen is a great actor and the film was outstanding, but Sheen's character says 'cauwp,' 'cahp' and 'cop' at one point in the movie. Though the differences may be subtle for those who are not from the Boston area, he said, most Beantown natives can quickly tell if an accent is authentic or not.

So to perfect his accent Mahoney visited friends and relatives living in the area, including his uncle and aunt Bill and Sylvia Stickney from Holliston, and would sit at bars in Framingham, Boston and surrounding areas to listen to how people from his former home talk.

"It was absolutely wonderful. That research, that prep work in Framingham was just so rewarding for me," he said.

Mahoney was born Framingham and grew up there until around age 10 when his family moved to the Midwest. He lived there until he joined the U.S. Army out of high school and began a 10-year stint as a Cobra fighter pilot flying attack helicopters in the military before moving to Hollywood in 1989 to pursue an acting career.

The now 49-year-old actor of Irish descent was raised on St. Lo Road by his parents, who both grew up in Framingham. He lives in Hollywood with his wife Anne Martel Mahoney, a native of Gardner, and nine-year-old daughter Veronica but tries to return to the area as frequently as he can.

"Where you start is where you're drawn back to," he said. "I don't find myself going back to Michigan. I find myself going back to Massachusetts."

The first Boondock Saints film, written and directed by [New England native Troy Duffy](#), premiered in just five theaters in 2000 and brought in just over \$30,000. However, DVD sales slowly picked up and reached the tens of millions of dollars over the past decade as more people ignored reviews from critics who were less than impressed with the movie.

And, in its brief history so far, Duffy's sequel seems to have taken a similar path as its predecessor. The film debuted late last month in limited theaters and has not received a strong backing from some movie critics, but fans have yet again responded favorably.

Mahoney said "All Saints Day" will go nationwide Nov. 13, because of its strong showing so far, and he said he thinks the movie is "bigger, better and badder" than the first.

"The expert critics aren't going to make or break this film. It's the average guy. The fans are discovering this one again," he said of the \$8 million production, which the majority of - like the first - was filmed in Toronto. "We pounded it out, worked our [butts] off and it shows."

When asked whether the film's solid box office performance thus far could lead to a Boondock Saints trilogy, he said, "it's up to the fans."

And, if a third movie were ever made, "Will [Detective Duffy] be back? I don't know. You'll have to see this one and go from there," he said.

Mahoney said he recently traveled to New York to shoot a small one-on-one scene with Cambridge native Matt Damon for "[The Adjustment Bureau](#)" a film set to be released by late 2010.

On meeting Damon for the first time, Mahoney said "He was every bit the gentleman I'd hear he was."

Mahoney, along with the rest of the Boondock cast, is currently doing work to promote the sequel.

He is also working on an autobiographical book, "A Cobra Pilot in Hollywood," which he hopes to be released by summer 2010.

The book is about his transition from military life to Hollywood.

The book is about Mahoney's circuit transition from military life to life in Los Angeles and trying to start an acting career - or as he puts it "from the cockpit to the silver screen."

"When you put on that Cobra pilot's jacket, it pretty much comes with half a dozen women attached to it. It's not rock-star status, but it's a pretty good lifestyle and it was hard to let go of," he said.

Besides giving up his job flying around helicopters equipped with machine guns and rockets, he also had to adapt to a new career path that was the opposite of the military "think don't feel" mentality.

But, despite the challenges, Mahoney has stuck with the red carpet dream he has had since his youth, when his family moved to Illinois, and he got his first on-stage experience singing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Though not having enough money after high school for theater classes led him down a longer-than-anticipated road to entertainment, Mahoney said, "I knew at age 10 I was going to be an actor."



Brian Mahoney (left) and director Troy Duffy on the set of "The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day" on Oct. 31, 2008. (Courtesy: Brian Mahoney's MySpace)

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