

Road to the Lemon Grove opens this Friday

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As the national premiere of his new movie, *Road to the Lemon Grove*, quickly approaches, Dale Hildebrand reflects on the journey that brought him here.

It's been a four-year process for the Southern Manitoba-born director, who hopes the film will help people reconnect with who they are, and where they come from.

"I want people to walk out of that theatre with a deeper appreciation for family and a deeper connection to their roots."

There have been some heart-breaking real-life experiences

that added an extra degree of poignancy during the film's production.

Hildebrand's father passed away during the pre-production, and his mother followed just a few months ago.

"It's taught me all over again that life is fleeting, and that family is so valuable and precious."

Road to the Lemon Grove focuses on an old-world Sicilian father trying to negotiate his way into Heaven.

The only way to achieve his goal is to go back and repair his relationship with his reluctant son. "He wants him to touch the earth, and reconnect with who he is, and the people from which he came," Hildebrand

says, adding that his own strong connections inspired much of the premise.

"I grew up in a Mennonite community and I'm very proud of that. My work ethic comes from working on the family farm. I value and appreciate my upbringing every single day."

He says the film is a departure from the mainstream type of movies that are out there today.

"It's an original kind of movie, not targeted to any particular audience. There's a lot of drama and light humour, and it goes against the grain. Cineplex is giving us this chance. That's great, and now we have to deliver."

It's been a busy time preparing for this weekend's opening.

"We've worked very hard to bring all the pieces together and invested a lot into it. We

really hope audiences will appreciate and enjoy it."

Gleaning from his own field of memories, Hildebrand says ultimately, it's not so much about box office sales as it is about inspiring a bit of soul-searching.

"My goal is to make movies that touch people's hearts and help them connect with the world they're from. You know, making a movie is a lot like farming. You plant some seeds and then you hope that they come to fruition."

Road to the Lemon Grove boasts an impressive cast which includes Burt Young, Nick Mancuso, Rosella Brescia, Morden native Loreena McKennitt, and performance

award winner Charly Chiarelli, who is also the co-writer of the script and plays four parts, most notably the father and son in the story.

Already the winner of four impressive industry awards, critics have affectionately dubbed the film, "*My Big Fat Italian Funeral*", describing it as "A magnificent film. Funny, uplifting, loving, hopeful..."

Road to the Lemon Grove opens Labour Day weekend in select Cineplex theatres in 17 cities across Canada, from Laval to Vancouver.

In Winnipeg, it can be viewed on Friday, August 30 at the Polo Park Cineplex. To view the trailer, go to <https://vimeo.com/263320354>

