

**By John Nemo**

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He came. They screamed. He walked. They screamed. He talked. They screamed. He waved. They *really* screamed.

In a scene usually reserved for Hollywood, local boy turned movie star Josh Hartnett, 24, appeared Wednesday at the Megastar Cinemas 16 in Edina to host a benefit screening of his new movie, "Hollywood Homicide," which hits theatres June 13 and co-stars Harrison Ford.

"It's a good crowd," said Hartnett as he scanned the hundreds of people – mostly screaming teenage girls – crowded around the red carpet outside the movie theatre. "It's almost rivaling Hollywood out here."

Hartnett, who stepped out of a limousine shortly before 8 p.m. wearing jeans and a black shirt, was on hand to help raise funds for CornerHouse, a Minneapolis-based child abuse evaluation center that has been struggling financially after government spending cuts.

More than 900 fans paid \$35 a seat and sold out two movie auditoriums while several others paid \$150 a head for a private pre-screening party hosted by Hartnett.

"It's all for a great cause," Hartnett said from the red carpet. "I want to thank everybody for coming out and supporting CornerHouse. That's what it's all about."

Wednesday's crowd was all about Hartnett, a St. Paul native who graduated from Minneapolis South High School in 1996. He has been acting since the age of 15 and is best known for his roles in the war-themed blockbusters "Pearl Harbor" and "Black Hawk Down," along with leading roles in romantic comedies like "40 Days and 40 Nights." His boy-next-door good looks and down-to-earth charm have made Hartnett one of the hottest young stars in Hollywood.

"It's so cool when a star comes back to his hometown and does something like this," said Jana Helin, 13, of Minneapolis. Helin and her friend, 14-year-old Leslie Peterson of Minneapolis, had been waiting outside the theatre since 3:30 p.m., a full four and a half hours before Hartnett arrived.

"We thought we might be able to get tickets, but it was sold out. Still, it was so totally worth it," Peterson said afterward, glowing from a close-up encounter with Hartnett. "I got his autograph and he said, 'I love you guys.'"

Further back in the crowd, 18-year-old Adam Burke of St. Paul looked out of place amongst all the screaming girls who pushed forward toward Hartnett.

"It's cool that Josh came from Minnesota and still lives here," Burke said, staying out of the fray. "He didn't get caught up in the Hollywood hype. I think he's a good role model. And all these girls here – man, it's crazy!"

The scene on the red carpet was pure Hollywood, as Hartnett hobnobbed for the cameras, signed autographs and spoke with members of the media. Later he introduced the movie inside both auditoriums.

"It's really important that you guys all came tonight," Hartnett told the audience as cameras continually flashed, illuminating his shadow against the large white movie screen behind him.

Hartnett tried his best to keep Wednesday's focus on CornerHouse, which he became familiar with through a high school friend who is the daughter of one of the center's board members. But it was easy to forget the star's good intentions amid all the screaming and hoopla of the evening. Hartnett, famous for being known as a great example of "Minnesota Nice," was asked if his hometown audience was behaving better than most.

"A little bit," he said, smiling. "But it's still the same thing. Adolescence is adolescence wherever you go."

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