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Annapolis makes it onto the big screen in 'Better Living Through Chemistry'

First-time filmmakers used Md. locations for film about small-town pharmacist with drug-enhanced ambitions

By [Chris Kaltenbach](#), The Baltimore Sun

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Filmmakers David Posamentier and Geoff Moore knew Annapolis was the perfect place to make their movie when someone heaved a trash can through a plate-glass window — and no one made a peep.

The someone was actor Sam Rockwell, who stars in "Better Living Through Chemistry" as a nebbishy small-town pharmacist unexpectedly displaying a chemically enhanced backbone. The place was State Circle in Annapolis, just across the street from the Maryland State House. Posamentier and Moore were shooting a scene that involved Rockwell's character vandalizing his own pharmacy. This being far from a big-budget production, there was only one replacement window on hand — meaning they pretty much had to get the shot the first time.

The fine folks of Annapolis were happy to play along. The results can be seen on movie screens throughout the country this weekend, including at the Charles Theater in Baltimore, as "Chemistry" begins its theatrical run.

The entire film, which takes place in a generic small town, was shot in Maryland, including a bike race held in Baltimore's Druid Hill Park ("That was a doozy of a day," says Posamentier), some tree-lined residential streets in Catonsville and numerous locations in the Annapolis area, including Quiet Waters Park and the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts.

The tone for the shoot was set on that Friday night across from the State House.

"There were over 150 people there watching," recalls Moore. "Our assistant director walked over and politely asked everyone to please not speak. And do not use any flash photography, because it will ruin this. ... And amazingly enough, 150 people, most of whom had a few drinks in them, were quiet and did not use flash photography.

"Sam threw the trash can, it smashed this window, there was this huge ruckus, we called, 'Cut' — and it was silent. We had to say, 'You can cheer now,' and everyone erupted in applause. They were so respectful of the process, it was just such a pleasant surprise."

Happily, pleasant surprises abounded during the making of "Better Living Through Chemistry," a five-week

shoot that brought the co-writer/directors, along with cast members Rockwell, Olivia Wilde and Michelle Monaghan, to Annapolis and environs in summer 2012.

"As first-time directors, there are so many challenges, and one of the biggest ones is finding great locations," says Posamentier, who grew up in New Jersey. "Annapolis was a dream. ... Not only did aesthetically we find everything that we needed, but the people of the city could not have been more receptive and excited to have us there."

The best thing about shooting in these parts? Not surprisingly, both guys, East Coasters happy to be getting away from California for a few weeks, mention the food.

"We came out about five weeks before shooting," says Moore, a native Texan raised in upstate New York, "and Dave decided he was going to set a task for himself to eat a crab cake at just about every restaurant that served one in the broad metropolitan area. He did a really great job." The best, both men agreed, came from Faidley's at Baltimore's Lexington Market and from the West End Grill in Annapolis.

The idea for "Better Living Through Chemistry," the first script written during their 10-year partnership to make it to the big screen, came from musing about the life of a pharmacist working across the street from their office.

"We would watch as this sort-of hangdog pharmacist, with the weight of the world on his shoulders, would be very helpful, be very attentive, but people really wouldn't look him in the eye," Posamentier says. "They just say, 'Give me my meds,' and move on. And from there spread this notion of, 'What if?' "

One crazy idea they had was to get Dame Judi Dench for a small but pivotal role. Surprisingly, the distinguished, Oscar-winning actress was game, says Moore. "But it was just too much for her to get to Baltimore for just a one-day shoot."

Yet another pleasant surprise was in order, however: One of the producers said he'd heard that Jane Fonda might be available. "And 12 hours later," Moore says, "she was there."

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