



THE GEMINIS AT 15

Sutherland up a note

Writers Drama

DAVID Sutherland says he owes his sanity to hip hop.

Sutherland, now in Alberta as story editor of Riverwood's *Caitlin's Way*, found much of the grounding for his now Gemini-nominated

scriptwriting for *Drop The Beat* over those long lonely night shifts when, as a solitary security guard, he passed the time with the help of a radio.

"Hip hop was one of the things that kept me sane. I was out there alone for the most part and it was like some other voice."

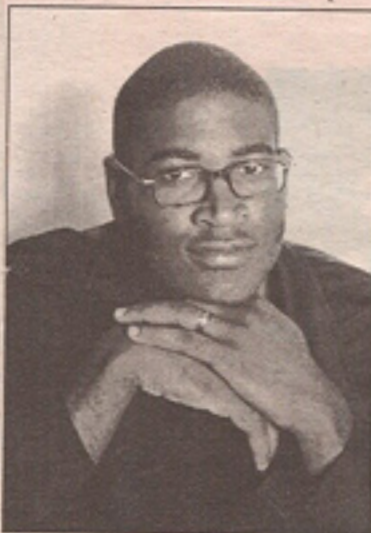
All of which came in handy when he came to write for AAC/Back Alley's *Drop The Beat*.

Some work Sutherland did on Epitome's *Riverdale* resulted in an invitation from a then-*Riverdale* and now-*Drop The Beat* cast member to write what at the time was a proposal for CBC about young people at a radio station. "And since I did college radio and college newspapers I said 'Sure.'"

With other writers he took part
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in a "blind taste test" where sample scenes were written by several writers and submitted to AAC, CBC and Back Alley for selection. On the basis of this, Sutherland was commissioned to write the pilot



Sutherland won the "blind taste test" to write *Drop the Beat*

episode, "Battle Royal," which was subsequently moved to the third episode slot and is now nominated for a Gemini.

Since that episode, Sutherland has continued to write for *Drop The Beat*, and directed his first episode a matter of weeks before his nomination.

And he's no stranger to awards either. Sutherland's first screenplay, the short *My Father's Hands*, dating

back to 1995 and finally shot in 1999, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival last year, won a \$20,000 prize in the Acapulco Black Film Festival and four awards at this year's Yorkton Short Film Festival and has been broadcast on CBC. HBO has plans to buy the film and air it late this year or early next year.

"I like to direct as well as write," says Sutherland. "It's a little harder to get those nuggets — people have got to try to understand you. They ask 'What are you?'"

"I'd like to do both TV and film, but you can't make a living in Canada doing feature film, and I think to keep you honest as a director and writer you've got to do both; you've gotta keep working, keep listening to people and their language, keep your ear to the ground."

Now his security guard days are set to get another airing with the semi-autobiographical feature film script *Eating The Bone*, currently in development with Citytv.

"It's about a security guard who's a photographer and a porn addict and meets and falls in love with the woman of his dreams, only to find out he can't get it up with a real flesh-and-blood woman because he's so addicted to porn. He wants to be an art photographer and has artistic aspirations and he has to make a choice because porn affects his art as well. It's all visual." •

Fiona MacDonald

Father wins again

BY SAMANTHA YAFFE

WRITER/director David Sutherland and producing partner Jennifer Holness of Hungry Eyes/Film Food

have won the HBO Award for best short film for *My Father's Hands* at the Acapulco Black Film Festival.

The duo are the first Canadians to win at the American festival, sponsored by HBO to showcase up-and-coming new talent.

My Father's Hands tells the story of a father and son who don't get along but must confront each other when they are shot and left to bleed and freeze to death in a meat locker.

Sutherland and Holness are currently developing their first feature, *Eating the Bones*, with Citytv.

The film is about a photographer addicted to pornography who walks a fine line between love and fantasy when he falls in love with the girl of his dreams. •