

# Where for art thou... Rikki?

## Thanet actor gives Bard's classic 21st century feel

EXCLUSIVE

By JAMIE MCGINNES

IT WAS only a matter of time... but Romeo and Juliet have been brought kicking and screaming into the 21st century.

The balcony scene is now conducted by text message and the feuding houses of Montague and Capulet switched to the rivalry between comprehensive and grammar schools.

The 'star cross'd lovers' have even changed their name... to Rikki and Julie.

The overhaul of the Shakespeare classic is the brainchild of Broadstairs actor and director Rob Rawles, who is shooting a version of the tragedy on location in Thanet.

He wants his half-hour film to be shown in schools to give warnings on issues such as underage sex, drug abuse and peer pressure.

Gone are the subtleties of the Bard's prose – and in is modern-day language and a role-call of teenagers.

### Results

Hannah Prentice and Ryan Abbasi take the title roles and the masked ball scene now takes place on school sports day.

Tybalt is renamed Tommy and Benvolio becomes Ben. Rikki belongs to a wealthy family, while Julie is from a single-parent household.

"The reason I wanted to make this film is that here's an example of how things can get out of hand if you're a bored teenager and the world doesn't understand you," said



**MODERN MAN:** Rob Rawles (left) has given Shakespeare's classic love story an up-to-date feel

"When the film is done it is just the beginning," said the father-of-one. "I want to do another 36!"

He said school departments such as English, media studies and drama lessons could use the film in lessons.

### Reworking

He said: "I've worked very hard on where this is going to go and I'm extremely pleased with the results."

A reworking of Romeo and Juliet is nothing new. Stage show West Side Story is based on the play while in 1996 film-maker Baz Luhrmann cast Leonardo di Caprio and Claire Danes in the title roles for his Oscar nominated Romeo + Juliet.

• DVDs of Rikki and Julie (Romeo and Juliet Today), copies of the screenplay and workshops can be bought from Mr Rawles' website: [www.romeoinschools.co.uk](http://www.romeoinschools.co.uk).

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