Delightful' superstar praised as he completes Jesse James

Brad for business

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In the 1880s, outlaw Jesse James was constantly dodging the law and the media.

Two years before his death in 1882 at age 34, James just wanted to live a quiet, peaceful existence — but that was not to be. There were too many people gunning for him.

From the time he arrived in Calgary in August to play James in The Assassination of Jesse James, Brad Pitt has similarly had to play cat-and-mouse games with the international media.

It's not just Pitt's superstar status, but his divorce from Jennifer Aniston and relationship with Angelina Jolie that has made him the target of the paparazzi.

Pitt, 41, is the star and executive producer of The Assassination of Jesse James, which tells the story of how James died at the hands of Robert Ford.

"It is the government's desire to see the film industry become a $400-million-a-year industry in the province in the near future. We realize this means creating incentives that will bring more films like The Assassination of Jesse James to the province and that is one of our priorities," says Liepert, who is the co-chairman of the Alberta Film Commission.

According to a Sun source close to the Jesse James production, it's not just Alberta's natural resources that are so attractive.

"It's the expertise of the crews in the province that continue to impress producers like David Valdes, who also produced Unforgiven and Open Range," says the source.

More than 250 local extras were used for a ballroom scene filmed in the Palliser Hotel.

They were chosen from the more than 3,000 who turned out for an extras casting call in August, the biggest turn-out for any movie filmed in the province. Calgary youngsters Dustin Bollinger, 7, and Brooklynn Proulx, 6, won the coveted roles of Jesse's children, Tim and Mary James.

In addition to Pitt and Affleck, the core cast of The Assassination of Jesse James includes Sam Rockwell, Sam Shepard, Mary-Louise Parker and Zooey Deschanel. According the Sun source the rumours that Benjamin Bratt and Robert Duvall have roles in the film are not true.

The film, which began shooting on Aug. 29, is scheduled to complete filming next week.

Despite the lengthy shoot — and the relentless media glare — Sun sources report the Fight Club and Mr. and Mrs.

Smith star was far more laidback than you'd expect from Hollywood's biggest leading man and just one more in an "unbelievably lovely cast."

"He was delightful," one source says of Pitt. "He was professional and easygoing and very easy to work with."

The source says that sentiment was echoed by others working on the project, noting everyone had "nothing but good things" to say about Pitt, before adding, "shockingly good things."

The insider says they know of no blowups or any of the other incidents that can sometimes occur when you're working long hours with people who, some might say, can afford to be less than gracious.

"You're working all night long and he was just so accommodating to everybody," the crew member says. "We worked nights in Edmonton until the sun came up and people were sure in good moods."

The source says that extended to Jolie, who was a regular visitor on the set with her adopted children. The crew member says Jolie came up and introduced herself as "Angie" on the very first day.

"She was just super low-key but nice to everybody," adding that "her kids would have playdates with some of the kid actors."

The Assassination began filming in southern Alberta in the McKinnon Flats area southwest of the city and subsequently filmed in Heritage Park, the Fairmont Palliser Hotel, the Kananaskis area and on several private ranches near Millarville, Turner Valley, Longview and Cochrane.

The production team recreated the town of Creed Colorado near Goat Creek north of Canmore at the cost of $1 million. On Nov. 25, Ron Liepert, the MLA for Calgary West conducted a four-day visit to this set for himself and five other MLAs.