

Cameras Roll on Expo Contest Screenplay

THE FEATURE FILM comedy *Rogue's Gallery*, starring Ving Rhames and Ellen Barkin, went before the cameras recently with a background we're especially proud of — the project got its launch via the 2004 Screenwriting Expo Screenwriting Competition. The script was a first-time effort for writer Brian Watanabe, an advertising copywriter who pursued his writing dreams after he was pink-slipped. "When the dot-com bust happened in San Francisco, there was a brutal downsizing. One day the cubes would be filled with people, and the next day they'd be gone like they never existed. It got me thinking," Watanabe says. He spent his unemployment checks on screenwriting classes, joined a writing group and came up with a dark comedy about "an office full of spies and assassins who are trying to survive a deadly downsizing." The screenplay became a finalist and then a comedy winner in

the 2004 Expo contest, which led directly to an offer of representation by manager Andrew Kersey, who was a contest judge. Kersey and Chadwick Clough, who runs the Script P.I.M.P. contest, which Watanabe also entered, took the project to Donnie Darko producers Sean McKittrick and Richard Kelly. They are now among the producers, as is Clough, who's executive producer. Financed by Infinity Films (*Capote*), the movie started shooting July 21 in Los Angeles, directed by Fouad Mikati from a script by Watanabe and Abe Levy. Watanabe, who now lives in Honolulu with his wife, was in Los Angeles to visit the set and take a round of meetings with producers and executives. "We're developing another script with a producer at a studio, and that just happened this week, so it's fantastic," he says. Congratulations, Brian! And readers, look for the full story soon in *CS Weekly*. **CS**

