

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

September 12, 2009 Saturday
Main Edition

They're 'nice young people'; Novelist impressed by Miley Cyrus, co-star; He wrote screenplay for singer-actress' latest movie.

BYLINE: Bo Emerson; Staff
SECTION: LIVING; Pg. 1D

Nicholas Sparks, who has written 14 best-sellers in 14 years, has finally discovered the best way to impress his 8-year-old twins.

No, it's not his Bentley, or the new 12,000-square-foot home he built in New Bern, N.C., or the Christian private school he created with his own money. It was an introduction to Miley Cyrus, whom his daughters met on the Tybee Island set of her new movie, "The Last Song," based on Sparks' screenplay.

Did they say anything to her? Well, they tried. "Their eyes were as big as saucers," said Sparks, who is in Atlanta today for a book signing.

Sparks took time before a signing in Charlotte to talk about the teen drama surrounding Miley's kissing scenes and more.

Q: You sign a lot of books, don't you?

A: Yesterday I signed for nine hours. I'm on my way to the bookstore now, and when I get there at 2 o'clock, there will be a long line, and I will sign from 2:30 until about 11 tonight. Then I'll start all over tomorrow and do the same thing.

Q: So how do you avoid carpal tunnel syndrome?

A: I do a ton of chin-ups. I do four sets of 25 chin-ups every day, seven days a week.

Q: We read about the steamy kissing scenes between Miley and her co-star Liam Hemsworth, and the cries from Hemsworth's Australian girlfriend that Miley had stolen her man. With all the drama, did you think you'd wandered into "High School Musical" by accident?

A: [Sparks laughs]. I spent time with both of them, Miley and Liam, and they were great. They were nice young people. You could tell they were passionate about the project and you could tell they had chemistry together. . . . With regard to anything else going on, I'll take your word for it. I'm 43, I'm a novelist, I got things to do, I don't speculate.

Q: Is it true that you wrote this story for Miley?

A: Yes and no. I was considering writing a story about a teenage female character. . . . And that's when Jennifer Gibgot from Offspring Entertainment called me and said, "Miley really liked 'A Walk to Remember' [the Mandy Moore movie, based on Sparks' novel]. Do you have anything for her?" And I said, "Funny you should ask."

Q: Does this experience make you want to write vehicles for other actresses?

A: Only to the extent that I have been asked by a few very well-known actors or actresses, "Hey, can we do the same thing you did with Miley?"

Q: You're good at writing stories that make people cry. When's the last time you cried at a movie?

A: I'm not a big crier at movies. ... I'd have to go back to childhood, go back to "Old Yeller."

Copyright 2009 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution