

# Jesse Hutch Joins Cast of Romantic Comedy Film, Connection Pending; Eric Petersen to Make Feature Directorial Debut

NASHVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, January 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Connection Pending, a late-1990s-set romantic comedy feature film from thisishardtoread productions has announced new casting and production updates as principal photography approaches in Tennessee.

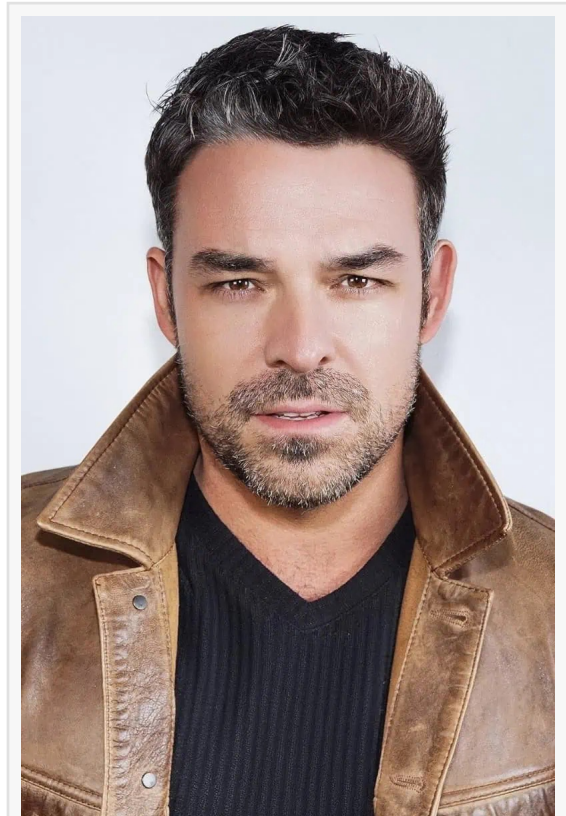
Actor [Jesse Hutch](#) (Heartland, Batwoman, A Cinderella Story) has officially joined the cast, taking on the role of Cody. Hutch brings a strong background in film and television and will play a pivotal role in the story's emotional and comedic arc.

Also joining the ensemble is actor [Miles Burris](#) (Righteous Gemstones, Lucifer, Young Rock) who will portray a firefighter in the film, adding to the project's grounded, character-driven world.

The film marks the feature directorial debut of [Eric Petersen](#), whose career spans Broadway, television, and theatrical directing. Petersen's extensive experience working with actors—both on stage and on camera—made him a natural fit to helm the project, with a strong emphasis on performance, tone, and storytelling.

Connection Pending is written and produced by Groundlings alumni Kelsey Cooke and Chris Guerra, who also star in the film and serve as executive producers. The film follows a shy coder and a free-spirited internet café worker who embark on a cross-country road trip to meet an online crush—only for a lie to unravel and an unexpected connection to form. Set in the 90s, the film leans into the era's analog charm, early internet culture, and classic romantic-comedy structure.

Previously announced casting includes Casey Cott (Riverdale), Scott Reeves (Nashville, General Hospital), Kellan Lutz (Twilight franchise, FBI: Most Wanted), Melissa Ordway (The Young and the



Jesse Hutch

Restless), Laura Osnes (One Royal Holiday, Raise a Glass to Love), Jason Marsden (Full House, Step by Step, Hocus Pocus, A Goofy Movie), James Kyson (Yes Day, BMF), Nakia Burrise (Danger Force, House Party), along with popular digital creators Andi Tillman (@andimarietillman) and Landon Bryant (@landontalks).

Production is already in motion across Nashville, Franklin, and surrounding Tennessee locations. The film is being shot on ARRI Alexa cameras and produced in association with Mane Co ([www.Maneco.co](http://www.Maneco.co)).

Connection Pending is produced by thisishardtoread productions, the Nashville-based production company founded by Cooke and Guerra, focused on creating character-driven entertainment with broad audience appeal.

Additional cast announcements and distribution news are expected to follow.

#### About thisishardtoread productions

Thisishardtoread productions is a Nashville-based film and television production company founded by Chris Guerra and Kelsey Cooke, specializing in elevated comedy, grounded storytelling, and character-driven work. thisishardtoread productions is driven by a vision to bring great comedy in film back—stories with depth, honesty, and real heart—while creating a home for bold independent filmmakers.

#### About Mane Co.

Mane Co. is a full-service film production company founded by Dustin and Michelle Laemmlen, dedicated to creating visually striking, story-driven work across features, commercials, and branded entertainment. Known for their cinematic approach, collaborative spirit, and high production value, Mane Co. brings directors, agencies, and studios' visions to life through a seamless development-to-delivery workflow.

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