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# Judge Says Film Can Be Released

By Steve Chawkins, Times Staff Writer

A federal judge has refused to block next month's release of movie "Alpha Dog," despite a defendant's argument that the film would bias jurors in the upcoming murder trial.

On Thursday, an attorney for Jesse James Hollywood, 26, asked the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals to review the opinion by US District Judge R. Gary Klausner before the movie's scheduled Jan. 12 release.

The film is based on the slaying of a San Fernando Valley teenager that was allegedly masterminded by Hollywood, but the judge ruled that it would not prejudice prospective jurors in Hollywood's yet-unscheduled murder and kidnapping trial.

Delaying the film until after the trial would amount to muzzling the media, Klausner said, writing that "the marketplace of idea loses vibrancy whenever the shadow of government censorship is cast over it."

Hollywood's attorney, James Blatt, said in an interview that the judge had not fully considered the help provided to the moviemakers by Hollywood's lead prosecutor, Santa Barbara County Deputy District Atty. Ron Zonen.

"If this motion picture were made without the assistance of the deputy district attorney, naturally we wouldn't like it, but we wouldn't object," Blatt said. "It is the alliance between the prosecution and the motion picture company that we're deeply concerned about." At Blatt's urging, a state appeals court ousted Zonen from the case in October. That decision is under appeal.

Zonen had shared confidential investigative files with producers of the Universal Studios film. He later explained that the movie would help police find Hollywood, who had fled shortly the 2000 kidnapping of 15-year-old Nicholas Markowitz and his slaying at a remote Santa Barbara County campground.

Hollywood, the alleged ringleader in the killing, was found last year in Brazil. Four other men have been convicted in the shooting death, which allegedly was an act of revenge for a drug debt owed by Markowitz's older brother.

Zonen, who received no money for his cooperation with producer Nick Cassavetes, prosecuted all of them. The film, starring Bruce Willis, Sharon Stone and Justin Timberlake, is billed as "a startling and all-too-real look at contemporary youth culture."