

Papi Is 'Beverly Hills Chihuahua' Breakout Star

The Chihuahua mix who stars in the film was discovered at an animal shelter.

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It was love at first sight for the man who discovered former shelter dog Rusco, the Chihuahua mix who stars as Papi in "Beverly Hills Chihuahua."

"We saw his picture on the Internet and when we got to meet him at the shelter, he had a great bouncy personality that went with it," said animal trainer Mike Alexander in an interview with Reuters.

Alexander trained Rusco for six months to prepare the dog for the role as Papi, a gardener's street-wise dog who falls for a pampered Beverly Hills dog named Chloe.

"Chihuahuas are a great breed, but they take a little more finesse [to train]. A lot of them have big attitudes, but they are also very small dogs, so you don't want to intimidate them," said Alexander, who lives with Rusco in Southern California.

The movie features a cast of more than 200 dogs, including Doberman Pinschers, Pugs, German Shepherd Dogs, and a Labrador Retriever. Alexander led a team of more than 60 animal trainers, and says the movie was his most challenging assignment ever.

"Every time I would turn the page, I would think 'this has got to be hardest gag in this movie'. And then the next page ... and on and on all the way to the end," he said.

"Beverly Hills Chihuahua" is in theaters now.