

Wednesday, June 3, 2015

OU ties abound in feature film due in theaters nationwide June 5

A historical action-adventure film set to grace the screens of movie theaters across the country has close ties to Oakland University. "Beyond the Mask," a faith-based thriller that chronicles the redemptive journey of an ex-mercenary in the British East India Company, celebrated its world premiere May 28 and will mark its national release this Friday, June 5.

The film boasts a bevy of OU connections. Producer Aaron Burns earned a bachelor's and master's degree from Oakland. He was a member of the Honors College and currently serves on the College's Alumni Advisory Board. His sister Marilyn Burns, who worked as a costume designer on the film, is also an OU graduate, as is cast member Steve Blackwood. Thomas D. Mahard, a frequent performer at Meadow Brook Theatre and special lecturer in OU's theatre department, is also among the cast. Additionally, OU music faculty member Terry Herald was the recording engineer for the film's soundtrack and Mark Simon, an OU management professor, helped market the film through the OU INCubator.

The film also stars Andrew Cheney ("Seasons of Gray"), Kara Kilmer ("Chicago Fire") and John Rhys-Davies ("Raiders of the Lost Ark"). Along with the cast and crew, more than 400 volunteers contributed to the film.

"As an OU alum, it was awesome to produce a film right here in Oakland County, with the support of so many talented friends from the OU network," said Aaron Burns. "We're excited to share the film with the world when it opens in over 100 theaters this weekend."

Set in the days of the American Revolution, the film was shot at various locations throughout Oakland County, including OU's Meadow Brook Hall. It gained attention after setting a record for on-demand distribution, a process that allows moviegoers to request a film screening at their local theaters. Now, Hollywood film distributor Freestyle Releasing has agreed to distribute the film to mainstream audiences.

Starting June 5, "Beyond the Mask" will run for a week in select theaters across the country. The three Michigan locations are the AMC Star Great Lakes 25 in Auburn Hills, Forum 30 in Sterling Heights and Emagine 18 in Canton. If it gains enough interest, the film could expand distribution and continue its theatrical run.

Tickets are available online only. For more about the film or to get tickets, visit beyondthemaskmovie.com.



OU alumnus Aaron Burns (right) produced "Beyond the Mask."



A still photo from a scene filmed at Meadow Brook Hall on OU's campus.



John Rhys-Davies, who has more than 200 acting credits in his career, starred in "Beyond the Mask."

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