

'Blood Red Sun' previews offered online, at festival - Hawaii News - Honolulu Star-Advertiser

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By Mike Gordon

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Filming isn't finished on the adaptation of "Under the Blood Red Sun," but the producers aren't waiting to show off their version of the popular young-adult novel set in World War II Hawaii.

Last week the indie crew released a short trailer online and shared plans to screen 15 minutes of the film during the upcoming Hawaii Book & Music Festival.

They're a first look at "Under the Blood Red Sun," which won't be released until September for a brief film festival run and then straight to on-demand viewing.

The book, which was first published in 1995, is required reading in middle school classrooms nationwide and has been read by 3 million students, according to Random House, which owns the publishing rights to the story.

Readers are drawn to Tomikazu "Tomi" Nakaji, an American-born, 13-year-old boy whose idyllic life is turned upside down by World War II and the internment of his father, grandfather and many other leaders in the Japanese community. Tomi, who worries that Billy, a mainland boy whose family moved to Hawaii, will no longer be his best friend, has to reconcile his heritage and his American identity in a time of fear and suspicion.

Tomi's life will be underscored in the festival segment being screened, said Dana Hankins, one of the film's producers.

"It's beautifully acted and shot and cut together," Hankins said. "The scene is part of the most dramatic and most emotional segments of the film in that the FBI and the police come to the Nakaji home and ask if their pigeons are being used to send messages to the enemy."

FBI agents tell Tomi to kill the birds.

"It's a pretty big, emotional scene where they are being questioned as potential traitors," Hankins said.

The Hawaii Book & Music Festival screening, which is free, will be offered twice in the Mission Memorial Auditorium: at 11:30 a.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. May 4. The book's author, Graham "Sandy" Salisbury, who grew up in Hawaii but now lives in Oregon, will answer questions about the film afterward.

Several local actors star in the film, including a pair of teenage boys in the lead roles: Kyler Sakamoto as Tomi and Kalama Epstein as Billy.

Some of the film was shot in November and some of it in February. The crew was all over Oahu: Hawaii Plantation Village, Roosevelt High School, the Pali Lookout, Judd Trail, Kaniakapupu ruins, Kokokahi YWCA, Kalaeloa, Sand Island Beach Park and several private homes.

One of the most powerful scenes was shot on a Sunday morning in February when the film crew shut down a section of Nuuanu Avenue between King and Merchant streets, Hankins said.

Director Tim Savage filled the scene with 125 actors and extras as he marched men of Japanese ancestry to an internment camp.

Descendants of the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team — World War II units primarily made up of second-generation Japanese-Americans — were among the extras used that day.

Although only a few additional scenes and some re-shoots still need to be completed, all of the visual effects still have to be created, including the waves of attacking Japanese planes and the integration of actual wartime footage, Hankins said. None of that will overwhelm the film, though.

"We are certainly not looking to re-create the war," Hankins said. "I think our creative decisions will be to continue to keep it personal and intimate rather than throw it open and wide with big wartime sequences."

Find the trailer on YouTube under the headline "Under the Blood Red Sun Teaser Trailer HD."

AND that's a wrap ...

Mike Gordon is the Star-Advertiser's film and television writer. Read his Outtakes Online blog at honolulupulse.com. Reach him at 529-4803 or email mgordon@staradvertiser.com.

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