

## 'Blood Red Sun' tale makes dramatic film production - Hawaii News - Honolulu Star-Advertiser

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### 'Blood Red Sun' tale makes dramatic film production

By Mike Gordon

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For 15 years, producer Dana Hankins tried to turn the beloved young-adult novel "Under the Blood Red Sun" into a film, failing twice before she found financial backing last year. Now that it's about to become a reality, its premiere scheduled for next month, Hankins often struggles to find words to describe the film.

But she's definitely thrilled at what she's seen.

"I knew we were going to make it but it continually surprises me how moving it is," she said. "I think it's our talented cast and their interpretation of words that are just words on a page until they bring those words to life."

"Under the Blood Red Sun" was written by Graham "Sandy" Salisbury, who grew up in Hawaii and now lives in Oregon. It's the story of a childhood friendship in the weeks after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. The book, published in 1995, is required reading in many middle school classrooms nationwide and has been read by more than 3 million students.

The film is destined for distribution through online streaming, but there will be three screenings before that happens.

It will premiere Sept. 13 to an audience of invited guests at the Hawaii Theatre. On Sept. 14, the public can view it for free at 1:30 p.m. at the Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor, where the author and cast members will be on hand. And Sept. 20, there will be a free outdoor screening on the lawn of the Pearl Harbor Visitors Center, starting with a red-carpet arrival by the cast at 6:15 p.m.

The film will be available for purchase online Sept. 14 at [www.underthebloodredsunmovie.com](http://www.underthebloodredsunmovie.com), Hankins said. (The website is not up yet.)

As organized as that schedule sounds, it doesn't mean the film is finished.

"No, it's not done but all the pieces are coming together," Hankins said.

The pieces include the musical score, five minutes of additional footage shot last month and color adjustments to make the film "more cinematic" and "reminiscent of 1941." (Just don't ask Hankins to explain what 1941 looks like — she can't.)

"We are leaning more toward contrasting tones," she said. "We feel there is greater emotion from seeing things in this way. It gives more character."

The film will bring to life the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor but don't expect the film's \$1 million budget to compete with Hollywood, Hankins said.

"I have been watching the visual effects, the Japanese Zeros and the attack," she said. "They are spectacular and perfect for our movie but we are not Michael Bay's 'Pearl Harbor.'"

(That's probably a good thing, too.)

"Under the Blood Red Sun" stars a pair of teenage newcomers, Kyler Sakamoto and Kalama Epstein, in the key roles of Tomi and Billy. And nearly all of the principal roles as well as the background extras are from Hawaii.

Tomi and Billy are the core of the story.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, when Tomi's father and grandfather are sent to an internment camp, the youngster worries that his pal Billy will stop being his friend. Tomi has to reconcile his heritage and his American identity in a time of fear and suspicion.

Any good dramatic story runs through a range of emotions — surprise, happiness, frustration, despair — and the two teenage actors deliver on each, Hankins said.

"There are beautiful performances," she said. "It's the combination of tone and rhythm of the words and facial expressions. And their eyes just kill you. Their eyes are just amazing."

AND that's a wrap ...

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