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Film gallops through story of Paul Revere ride

10-minute movie is shot at Old Sturbridge Village

By Craig S. Semon TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

STURBRIDGE— Listen my children and you shall hear of the midnight filming of the ride of Paul Revere.

In the month of May, a Los Angeles crew started shooting at Old Sturbridge Village, a film about the famous patriot's role as night messenger in the battles of Concord and Lexington.

Brian Ide and Michael Matsumoto serve as directors of "The Ride," a documentary focusing on the historic events that unfolded overnight on April 18-19, 1775. Mr. Ide is also the executive producer.

"The great thing about it (Paul Revere's ride), it's one of those stories that people thought they knew. A guy on a horse yelling, 'The British are coming; the British are coming'." Mr. Ide said. "And then when you really get down to it, you realize how little of this story we actually know."

With a focus on documentaries, Mr. Ide's production company, Meriwether Productions, has had other film ventures including "Honduras" (filmed on location) and "The Pilgrimage Project" (filmed in Jerusalem). Mr. Matsumoto, who has served as a producer on CBS' "Survivor" for the past several seasons, is being shipped off next week to China for a six-month shoot of the next installment of "Survivor."

"Ultimately, when we picked Revere it was perfect because the story of his ride is one that people know some about," Mr. Ide said. "It's self-contained in and of itself but in the very end of his ride, the Battle of Lexington, the shot heard around the world, is really the opening of the war itself. So the end of our (story) is really the perfect opening of the door for the larger picture."

Mr. Ide said the motivation behind the Paul Revere project was twofold — to create something that makes history more interesting for young people while making them hungry for more of the story.

Historically accurate but more of a concept piece than a detail piece, "The Ride" is "much darker, edgier and fast-paced" with driving music and quick-edits, Mr. Ide said.

"At the end, the final project will be about eight to 10 minutes long," Mr. Ide explained.

“It’s more of a concept piece with the hope that people who watch will become more interested in the historical story and then they will go and find facts and resources.”

Dustin Booth — who was a feature player on the Fox series “Prison Break” (because his shoulders are covered with tattoos) and whose face will soon be plastered on a “Breath Right” nasal strips box that will be distributed across the nation — plays the American Revolutionary hero.

“I haven’t been to a place like this with this much history and true to the era,” Mr. Booth said of Old Sturbridge Village.

Besides the height differential (Mr. Booth is 6-feet, 4-1/2 inches, while Paul Revere is believed to have been in the 5-foot 6-inch range), the Wisconsin native said the biggest challenge was to lose his “mishmash of Midwestern dialect.”

Shooting from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. the next morning, the filming started May 21 and ended Friday, finishing up a day ahead of schedule.

“The biggest benefit we had to this is that our whole thing is shot at night,” Mr. Ide said. “So we can make things look different than they actually are and we have a kind of creative license, and that’s the benefit of having great artistic people one.”

Matt Fore, the director of photography on the Paul Revere project, said the creative challenge for him was playing with darkness. And, in a sense, darkness becomes a principal character in the filming of the story.

“It’s interesting to try to recreate the moon or some kind of motivated lighting source since all you had is the moon back then,” Mr. Fore said. “You can hide a lot of stuff with darkness. You can be picky and choosey and highlight what you want.”

Starting in Kentucky, Mr. Ide and Mr. Matsumoto combed the South and East before finding the perfect locale at Old Sturbridge Village. The site had been suggested by coordinating producer (and Grafton resident) Heather Riley.

“Heather tipped us off and we couldn’t have asked for anything more perfect,” Mr. Matsumoto said. “It’s a whole maintained village that serves as the perfect backdrop.”

“Brian and Michael had incredible vision on this, and obviously Matt has become part of that as well,” Ms. Riley said. “And, also, I think there is a push to bring feature filmmaking to Massachusetts ... Massachusetts has a lot of exciting stories. It has a lot of great people and great things going on. For me, that’s why I became involved in the project, and I definitely think it worked out real nice.”

Although Old Sturbridge Village portrays New England life in the 1830s, many of the buildings are architecturally authentic structures dating from Paul Revere’s time.

Pam Lozier, marketing coordinator at Old Sturbridge Village, was on hand to make sure cast and crew avoided buildings and structures that were definitely architecturally inaccurate to the Revolutionary War era. This includes advising the filmmakers not to shoot in front of the OSV bank (“the columns are very particular of the 1800s”) and the wooden bridge (whose beam and sides work was patented in 1821, she said).

In addition to offering her expertise, Ms. Lozier makes her film debut as a Colonial heroine who stands by her Minuteman. And not only does she make it on camera, she was even given a speaking role, which she utters the immortal words, “I’ll get your gun.”

Mr. Ide said using real places for the filming was intentional.

“Part of our goal with this thing is that young people can see that these places are still there and you can interact with them in that way,” Mr. Ide said. “To make them interesting as possible and alive as possible, and we don’t have to recreate them. We don’t have to build them in L.A. to do that. We can come here and use them, the real spots.”

Old Sturbridge Village donated the use of its grounds, Sturbridge Host Hotel donated rooms, and area restaurants donated meals. If all goes well, “The Ride” will be completed in the fall, Mr. Ide said. From there, the film will be distributed to schools across the country. In addition, “The Ride” is slated to have a “special premiere” at the Old Sturbridge Village movie theater.