

OTHER VIEWS

What makes an American Indian film?

A few weeks ago I was forwarded a press release from the *East Oregonian* editor for a film entitled “Moonhair: A Bow And Arrow Fantasy” that billed itself as a “fun, exciting fantasy/adventure Native American film” and “the first American film to feature an all Native American cast.”

It sounded intriguing enough from my cursory glance, but I had to put it on the back burner to pay mind to some more immediately pressing events.

When I finally came back around to “Moonhair,” I spent more time inspecting the press release and browsing its website and felt off-put by what I was reading. I feel like I’ve written and read enough press releases to have a good sense of what constitutes a dubious statement.

For all of the film’s claims to being an American Indian production by featuring a completely American Indian cast and its plot being based on a Blackfeet legend, it became apparent after a little detective work that the film’s writer/director “Happy” Jack Feder is non-Native and deemphasizes this fact to a fault. The lengths the film’s press release goes in promoting itself as Native American begin to feel disingenuous or at the least overcompensating.

The distribution strategy for “Moonhair” also tries to play off the film’s Native American status. Supporters of the film who promote it through their own social media feeds are entitled to a percentage of the sales resulting from their assistance.

That sounds like an interesting distribution model, but when the filmmaker emphasizes that “it’s an amazing way for all Indians to in effect become part owners of an Indian film,” the distribution strategy sounds more like a pyramid scheme that specifically targets American Indians.

I have no doubt that Feder has the most respectful intentions in making “Moonhair” his cast comprised mostly of nonprofessional actors donated their time and energy to this modest project. However, it begs the question of what constitutes a “Native American film.”

Is the status of “Native American film” bestowed by the film’s plot revolving around Native American issues or stories, featuring a cast comprised of mostly (if not all) American Indian actors, being written/directed/produced by American Indians, or some combination of those qualities?

There has been a long-running tradition in Hollywood films of having non-Native actors playing protagonists in Native American story lines. From Burt Lancaster being doused in red makeup in “Jim Thorpe — All-American” to Charles Bronson playing a Navajo code talker in “Never So Few,” the notion of a film being deemed “Native American” based solely on its storyline rings hollow when the leads are being played by non-native Hollywood stars. The most embarrassing (and offensive) example in recent years is Johnny Depp as the dead crow-wearing Tonto in “The Lone Ranger.”

“Smoke Signals” (1998) feels like the gold standard in terms of American Indian film making. Its director, Chris Eyre, and writer, Sherman Alexie, are both tribal members, as was the vast majority of the cast. And as far as mainstream cinema was concerned, it completely shattered the stereotypical portrait of American Indians as stoic, mystical warriors and offered a contemporary, three dimensional depiction of modern tribal members.

In 2002, “Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner” took the of concept of Native American film making even further than “Smoke Signals.” The entire film — from its writer/director, production crew, cast, and script — is completely the product of the Inuit people. The one non-Native person involved was an executive producer. Although it can’t claim to be the first American film to feature an all-American Indian cast (it’s a Canadian production) it certainly bears the distinction of being the first completely indigenous film.

For a fascinating examination of the history of American Indians in film I would recommend watching the documentary “Reel Injun.” It gives a look at the portrayal of American Indians in cinema, how that portrayal affected popular culture’s often inaccurate notion of American Indians, and the eventual arrival of the independent Native American film movement that spawned movies like “Smoke Signals” and “Atanarjuat.”

I guess I would have to say that an American Indian film is defined by its content and not what it purports itself to be. If a film is truly American Indian, then there is no need to trumpet that fact. It will be self-evident.



J.D. KINDLE
Comment

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Elvis impersonator shakes things up

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

Grab your “Blue Suede Shoes” and head to Wildhorse Resort & Casino for a special Valentine’s Day event.

A complete date night package is available, including dinner and a show with The King. Tiah DeGrofft of Wildhorse community relations said the event features a special performance by Elvis impersonator Justin Shandor.

“It is the perfect Valentine’s night out,” she said. “Elvis is a heartthrob.”

Shandor began professionally impersonating The King when he was 16 and has spent the last decade practicing and perfecting his skills. Shandor took the top prize during the fourth annual Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist competition put on by Elvis Presley Enterprises at the Orpheum in Memphis.

The victory garnered him a \$20,000 cash prize, an endorsement from Graceland and the title of the “World’s Ultimate Elvis.” His career has been “All Shook Up” ever since.

Elvis fans around the world are impressed by Shandor, DeGrofft said. And with his talent, she said it’s easy to see why.

“He has such a striking re-



Photo contributed by eNR Services

Justin Shandor, “The World’s Ultimate Elvis,” will perform a special Valentine’s Day show at Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

semblance to Elvis, that even Graceland has confused his images for the real deal,” she said. “His voice is spot on as well.”

DeGrofft referred to a time when Graceland had contacted a casino where Shandor was performing and told them they couldn’t use a photo of Elvis to advertise their event. However, the picture in question was actually of Shandor.

Tickets are now on sale for the Saturday, Feb. 14 event. The

Ultimate Elvis Night, which includes dinner, begins at 6 p.m. at Wildhorse, located off Highway 331, Pendleton. Tickets are \$85 per couple. The show begins at 8 p.m. For those who only want to attend the show, tickets are \$20 per person.

DeGrofft encourages people to purchase tickets in advance as Shandor’s Wildhorse performances typically sell out. Tickets are available at www.wildhorseresort.com or at the

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

Tri-Cities Sportsmen Show

•Jan. 16 1-7 p.m.; Jan. 17 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Jan. 18, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

•TRAC Center, 6600 Burden Blvd., Pasco

www.shuylarproductions.com

\$9/adults, \$4.50/ages 6-12 (and seniors on Friday). For lovers of the outdoors, features the latest in outdoor equipment, outdoor activity tips, interactive displays, seminars, door prizes.

Tri-Cities Family Expo

•Jan. 23 noon-8 p.m.; Jan. 24, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

•TRAC Center, 6600 Burden Blvd., Pasco

www.tcfamilyexpo.com

\$5/adults, \$3/seniors, military with ID, \$1/kids. Sponsored by Kadlec Regional Medical Center, the event features vendors, entertainment (clown act, Ronald McDonald magic show, clogging) and activities (dentistry for kids, dance connection, dance party and Zumba) for all ages and a youth mentoring seminar.

Art

Art of War: The Historical Impact of Posters 1939-1945

•Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last day

•Tamastislikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.

www.tamastislikt.org

\$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. Jim Givan of Yakima began collecting war posters even before his lifelong career in the Marine Corps. Runs through Jan. 10.

“All Things Bright and Beautiful”

•Monday-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

•Betty Feves Memorial Gallery, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.

Free. Gallery also open by appointment by calling 541-278-5952. Runs through Feb. 19.

“EOU Staff Exhibition”

•Monday-Fridays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

•Wednesday, Jan. 14 gallery talk; 5-7 p.m.

•Nightingale Gallery, East-

ern Oregon University, La Grande

www.eou.edu/art/faculty

Free. Features the works of Eastern Oregon University visual arts professors, including Peter C. Johnson, sculptural ceramics; Susan Murrell, abstract installations and painting; Cory Peeke, remnant-imagery collage; and Michael Sell, photography. Runs through Jan. 30.

Peterson’s New Year’s Show

•Tuesday-Sundays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

•Peterson’s Gallery and Chocolatier, 1925 Main St., Baker City

www.petersonsgallery.net

Free. Features most requested artists in 2014, including Paul Hoelscher, a painter from Baker City; Pattie Young, a metal artist from Boise; and Terri Axness, a painter and ceramic artist from Haines. Runs through Jan. 31.

Heritage Station Museum

•Tuesday-Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

•108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton

www.heritagestationmuseum.org

\$5/adults, \$2/student, \$4/seniors, \$10/family.

Music

Winter Handbell Concert

•Saturday, Jan. 10; 2 p.m.

•First Presbyterian Church, 201 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton

www.ringpraiseministry.org

Freewill offering. A trio of local handbell choirs (Bells of Joy from the First Presbyterian Church, Bells of Peace from Peace Lutheran Church and the Celebration Ringers from the First Christian Church) will perform under the direction of Phyllis Tinch of Ring Praise Ministry. The Nampa, Idaho woman rings three octaves of Schulmerich handbells.

Dan Faller

•Saturday, Jan. 10; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

•Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Pop Rocks

•Saturday, Jan. 10, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar at

Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Dakota Brown Band

•Friday, Jan. 16; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

•Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Beat Frequency

•Friday, Jan. 16; Saturday, Jan. 17, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Cabin Fever Concert

Dutch Oven Dinner Show

•Saturday, Jan. 17; 6 p.m.

•Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395

Matinée Show

•Sunday, Jan. 18; 3 p.m.

•Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395

www.facebook.com/pages/Cabin-Fever-Concert-Hermiston-Oregon/112003375533063

\$35/dinner show (advanced tickets required, available at The Cottage, 1725 N. First St., Hermiston), \$10/ matinee show (may purchase at the door or in advance). Musical variety show features local talent.

Retro Ed

•Saturday, Jan. 17; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

•Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Cherry Road Gang

•Friday, Jan. 23; Saturday, Jan. 24, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Kelley James

•Friday, Jan. 23; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

•Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Tyler Scruggs

•Saturday, Jan. 24; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

•Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Cabin Fever Concert

•Sunday, Jan. 25; 3 p.m.

•American Legion Hall, 325 W. Second St., Lone

\$15, advance tickets required (purchase at lone/Hep- pner branches of the Bank of Eastern Oregon Dutch Oven Dessert Show. John Wambke & Friends take their musical variety show on the road to lone. Includes the lone pep band.

Night life

Wednesday Night Live!

•Wednesdays, 8 p.m.

•Jan. 14: Jamaroke with Rock Bot Band

•Jan. 21: Sumptown DJ, DJ Katie & dancing

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Digital Karaoke

•Thursdays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Mac’s Trivia Night

•Thursdays, 8 p.m. No cover

•Mac’s Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton

21 and older. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes.

Wine tasting

•Fridays, 4-8 p.m.

•Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.

Open Mic

•First/third Friday each month, 8 p.m. to midnight

•The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

www.facebook.com/groups/pendletonopenmic

Karaoke

•Fridays 8 p.m. (9 p.m. if game on)

•Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

DJ and dancing

•Fridays, 8 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Theater, stage & film

Dancing with Hermiston Stars

•Saturday, Jan. 10; 6:30 p.m.

•Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St.

www.desertartscouncil.com

\$35/adults, \$20/students; tickets purchased in advance are \$5 less. Six community members work with professional dancers with the Utah Ballroom Dance Company and will compete with money going to the charity of each dancer’s choice.

“Girl’s Night: The Musical”

•Friday, Jan. 16, 8 p.m.

•Toyota Center, Kennewick

Presley’s first record up for auction

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — In 1953, Elvis Presley walked into Sun Records in Memphis and recorded the song “My Happiness.” He was only 18.

For \$4, Presley was able to leave the studio with an acetate copy of the 78 RPM record, meant as a gift for his mother Gladys. But, as the story goes, Presley stopped by a friend’s house to listen to the recording and left it there. The Presley family did not have a record player, according to Elvis Presley Enterprises, which operates Graceland.

The acetate — Presley’s first recording — has remained in his friend’s safe for decades. And on Thursday it was put up for auction at Graceland along with other Presley-related memorabilia.

Wildhorse Gift Shop.

For more information, contact info@wildhorseresort.com or 800-654-9453.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

\$37-\$59.50. This touching and hilarious musical takes audiences on a journey into the lives of a group of female friends. Laugh, cry and even sing and dance in the aisles to some the most popular songs of the ‘80s and ‘90s!

“Memphis The Musical”

•Tuesday, Feb. 3, 8p.m.

•Toyota Center, Kennewick

www.ticketmaster.com

\$47-\$67. From the underground dance clubs of 1950s Memphis comes a musical that bursts off the stage with explosive dancing, irresistible songs and a thrilling tale of fame and forbidden love.

“Beauty and the Beast”

•Register by Friday, Feb. 6

•Hermiston Parks & Recreation, 180 N.W. Second St.

\$50/residents, \$63/non-residents. Youths from third through 12th grade are invited to register for a community drama class. The twice weekly sessions (Mondays/Wednesdays from 4-6:30 p.m.) will conclude with a pair of performances April 28-29.

Hot tickets

•Ultimate Elvis Night. Saturday, Feb. 14 at Wildhorse Resort & Casino. \$85 per couple for dinner/show or \$20 each for show only via www.wildhorseresort.com. Features Elvis impersonator Justin Shandor.

•“Mama Mia.” Thursday, March 19, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats on sale Jan. 23 (\$59.50-\$82) via www.ticketmaster.com.

•So You Think You Can Dance-Live Season 11 Tour. Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$50-\$65) via www.ticketmaster.com.

•Sasquatch Music Festival. Memorial Day weekend, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$325 and up for 4-day pass) via www.livenation.com.

•Foo Fighters. Saturday, Sept. 12, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$45-\$75) via www.livenation.com.

Want to get your event listed in our calendar? Send information to tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com, or c/o Tammy Malgesini, 333 E. Main Street, Hermiston, OR, 97838.

MOVIE REVIEW

‘American Sniper’ is quintessential Eastwood

By JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

A mere six months after re-releasing the Four Seasons drama “Jersey Boys,” Clint Eastwood has again lapped his younger directing colleagues with his second film of 2014 and his best movie in years. “American Sniper” is quintessentially Eastwood: a tautly made, confidently constructed examination of the themes that have long dominated his work.

“American Sniper,” based on Navy SEAL marksman Chris Kyle’s best-selling memoir, is both a tribute to the warrior and a lament for war. Shirking politics, the film instead sets its sights squarely on its elite protagonist (Bradley Cooper), a traditional American war hero in an untraditional war.

Here is an archetypal American: a chew-spitting, beer-drinking Texas cowboy who enlists after the 1998 bombings of American embassies with resolute righteousness and noble patriotic duty. The once wayward Kyle finds his true calling



Warner Bros. Pictures

Kyle Gallner, left, and Bradley Cooper appear in a scene from “American Sniper.”

in the Navy, and he heads to Iraq with a moral certainty that no amount of time served or kills will shake. He’s there to kill bad guys — “savages” he calls them at one point.

And kill he does. With 160 confirmed kills, Kyle is believed to be the most lethal sniper in U.S. history.

Shortly before shipping out, he weds Taya, played by Sienna Miller, who gives a refreshingly lively take on a usually one-dimensional character. She’s more cynical than her husband, who returns to their growing family between tours, his head increasingly stuck in Iraq.

He’s much like a terse and weary Western hero torn from home; an early shot through the front door of their home evokes the famous final image of John Ford’s “The Searchers.” Instead of a Stetson, Kyle wears a baseball cap, turned backward when he takes aim. “I’m better when it’s breathing,” he tells an early instructor after shooting a snake.

Cooper is extraordinary as Kyle. He has beefed up, adopted an authentic Texas drawl and endowed Kyle with a commanding swagger. The question is if the mythical rendering of “American Sniper” fits its more complex basis of reality. Kyle, who died

“American Sniper”

★★★★☆

R, 124 minutes

tragically in early 2013, belies easy summary. He, for one, boasted of shooting looters in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. His clarity of mission could also be said to mirror the mistaken convictions of politicians that put him in Iraq.

But I believe Eastwood’s purpose here is to depict a straight arrow in the fog of a questionable war. (A pivotal late scene takes place in a gathering sand storm that obliterates the frame in clouds of dust.) The soldier is true; the war — confused, bureaucratic — isn’t.

The film’s narrow perspective, centered on Kyle, is both the best and worst thing about it. “American Sniper” may be a much needed tribute to the sacrifice of American soldiers, but it’s lacking context. Few Iraqis here are seen as anything but the enemy.