

Scriptwriters compete to have their labor of love made into a movie



Yak Canutt

Outside of rodeo and motion picture circles, few people know the name Enos “Yakima” Canutt. Chickasaw citizen Brian Johnson and his writing partner Deven Parmar hope to change that.

Johnson, an Ada, Oklahoma, resident, spent two decades in Los Angeles where he and Parmar sculpted a script centering on Canutt’s life as a rough and tumble rodeo star turned silent movie star and stuntman.

“We’ve had the script for 15 years,” Johnson said. “We wrote it and then we rewrote it and rewrote it again. We pitched it to a couple of studios, and it didn’t go anywhere.”

A co-worker in the Chickasaw Nation Multimedia Department told Johnson about a scriptwrit-

ing competition and encouraged him to submit the work, telling him, “It’s a really good script.”

The competition’s judges at Kinolime.com agreed.

“Out of hundreds of submissions, we made the top 26,” Johnson said.

The winning script, as determined by votes cast by the general public, will turn into a movie.

“Kinolime showcases the top scripts. ... Through our screenplay competitions, you decide which stories make it to the big screen,” according to Kinolime.com.

Johnson and Parmar’s entry is titled “The Pioneer.” Deadline to cast votes is May 25.

“The Pioneer” tells Canutt’s life story, including his familial relationships, which could be as tumultuous as the bucking broncos he rode.

His riding talents eventually drew the attention of directors and producers in the era of silent movies, which then led to starring roles.

Unfortunately, Canutt’s voice proved to be not conducive to “talkies.” This led to his transition to stuntman work, doubling for big name stars like John Wayne.

“Jackson Sundown, Canutt’s rodeo mentor, was a member of the Wallowa Band of Nez Perce Indians. I think being Native and having Native stories told by Native people is very important, because we are able to use our voice to tell stories, and not in someone else’s

voice,” Johnson said.

“It’s based on a true story,” he said. “Deven and I created a reality TV show about stuntmen and were interviewing stuntmen and women in Hollywood. Everybody kept talking about Yakima Canutt, who we had never heard of.”

One of the stuntmen who called attention to Canutt was Terry Leonard, one of Harrison Ford’s stuntmen in “Raiders of the Lost Ark.”

“Terry Leonard had worked with Yak toward the end of Yakima’s career. He told us what a dynamic person he was, and we started researching his life.”

Johnson says he appreciates any support they can get for their entry. Those interested in participating may do so by visiting Kinolime.com.

CONTRIBUTED BY Loné Beasley, Media Relations



Brian Johnson