

LOCAL NEWS

Film shot in KM to be shown at Joy

EMILY WEAVER

eweaver@kingsmountainherald.com

A short film that was inspired by and shot in Kings Mountain will have its debut theatre screening at the Joy Performance Center on Wednesday, November 7 at 7:30 p.m.

The film, entitled "Without Hope," was filmed, directed and produced by Don Johns, of Charlotte. The best way to describe the story, Johns said, is "Cast Away" on a planet. "It's Science Fiction with a little Romance in it, Drama and Adventure," he said. The underlying message of the film revolves around the axiom, "you don't know what you have until you lose it."

Tickets to the screening are being sold for \$5 each. All of the proceeds from the film's debut will be given to the Kings Mountain Little Theatre, Johns said. Tickets can be purchased at the box office on opening night.

The screening will also feature DVD and poster give-a-ways and a chance for the audience to meet the cast through a question and answer session, following the 36 minute, 30 second-length film.

Johns, who said he has always been attracted to the filming industry, was on his way to a casting call as an extra for the George Clooney movie "Leatherheads" when he drove past his inspiration. He was driving by Kings Mountain on I-85, when something caught his eye. It was the mica in the pits of Kings Mountain Mining, LLC. "I didn't know what it was. I just saw this flashing. The morning sun must have hit it just right and it literally caught my eye," he said.

"On the way back I got off the exit and I just drove around in there and thought this looks like another planet. So I immediately started thinking, 'I've gotta shoot a movie here.' So I started writing a script and the first thing that came to my mind was Science Fiction. He's got to get on this planet."

He finished the script. A couple of months later, he was packed into a crowded gymnasium with hundreds of other "Leatherheads" extras when he



Michael Montero slides down a mound at Kings Mountain Mica in filming of "Without Hope."

met Rick Alexander, who would later become one of *Without Hope's* actors and producers. They started talking and Johns told him that he was trying to secure a location for his second film. Alexander asked him where it was and Johns told him, Kings Mountain. Alexander called Joe Champion. Other connections seemed to fall easily into place. Jim Champion, with the Kings Mountain Little Theatre, works for Zemex, a company that owns Kings Mountain Mining, LLC. With his help they were able to secure the film's location and opening venue.

"It was just really amazing how this whole thing came together," Johns said. "The film has turned out better than what I imagined it turning into and the fact that the Kings Mountain people have been so generous to us, we're going to show it in Kings Mountain."

They filmed "Without Hope" in one very hot weekend. The outside temperatures were climbing around 100 degrees, but inside the shallows of the mine pits, where very little air flows, he said, it felt like 120 degrees. The crew put their

make-up on over lunches at Wendy's, because it was too hot to apply on location. "We would have sweated it right off," Alexander said. They caught several curious stares at Wendy's. But behind some of the inquisitive eyes, they found a kind community.

Johns said that he feels like the city's adopted son. "I really want the community to come out because I think a lot of people probably drive by that mine and they probably have no idea what it looks like in there," he said. But now people can see Kings Mountain's "other world" through the imaginative eyes of the film's creator.

Prior to "Without Hope," Johns wrote, directed, produced and filmed another short, entitled "On my Last Breath." It placed in the top 3 of the people's choice awards in a Charlotte film festival last year. He said that he plans to make his first feature-length film next, incorporating, once again, his muse - Kings Mountain.

For more information about the film or to view the trailer, visit withouthopemovie.com



GARY STEWART / HERALD

Leigh Ann Long, left, secretary at Kings Mountain High School, welcomes Donna Douglas (a.k.a. Elly Mae Clampett) to the school Tuesday.

KMHS choral students hear TV star 'Elly Mae Clampett'

GARY STEWART

gstewart@kingsmountainherald.co

The Elly Mae Clampett of The Beverly Hillbillies TV show mirrored the younger life of Donna Douglas, a real-life country girl from a small rural community in Louisiana.

Stardom didn't come easy, nor quickly, she told students in Shaye Truax's choral class at Kings Mountain High School Tuesday afternoon.

As a youngster, her mode of travel was not an old truck driven by a cousin like Jethro, but was a horse saddled by her

mother to take Donna and her brother for an occasional visit to their grandmothers. There was no "cement pond," but the family did take a "vacation" sometimes - a trip to a nearby river to swim or fish.

There were critters.

Douglas was a tom-boy who could play any sport. Her dream was to become a professional fast-pitch softball pitcher. She had an opportunity, but found it wasn't for her after all.

The smaller acting jobs she had prior to making it big with one of the top TV shows of the

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