

## PBR GOES HOLLYWOOD!

### Bull riding returns to the silver screen with "Hearts & Bones"

by James Drew

It was only a matter of time before Professional Bull Riders went Hollywood.

That time came last November at the PBR Finals, when Neverland Films hauled their production company to the MGM Grand to roll footage for its upcoming motion picture "Hearts and Bones."

Bart Rosenblatt, one of the film's producers, said seeing PBR action live changed a lot of things for him and Academy Award-winning director Xavier Koller.

"The dedication of the athletes was amazing to us," Rosenblatt said. "These guys are adrenaline junkies, and we tried to show that in the film. This is the next extreme sport. Truthfully, after seeing this sport in its modern form, the movie shifted a bit."

For instance, after seeing a bull rider get stomped and then limp off to the solace of a corner and a glass of water, the script was changed to portray that very scene. The Justin Sportsmedicine Team's role also was emphasized, and a cowboy using a laptop computer was never in the mix until the producers and Koller saw it firsthand and — voila! — Kiefer Sutherland, one of the film's stars, uses one in the movie.

"We shot three days at the MGM Grand during the Finals and then rented the arena for two days after the Finals," Rosenblatt

said. "But we still needed more footage, so we converted a gymnasium on the Santa Maria (Calif.) fairgrounds into the MGM arena. One day there was a girls basketball tournament in there, and the next day we painted it black, trucked in 250 tons of dirt, two trailer loads of chutes and ran the bulls through the hallway. It was interesting, but I think we pulled it off. You shouldn't be able to tell the difference."

So what's the movie about? Sutherland, who has starred in such films as "Flatliners," "The Lost Boys," "Young Guns," and "The Cowboy Way," plays a bullfighter. His brother, portrayed by Swiss actor Marcus Thomas, is a star bull rider. Basically, they are fighting over the same barrel racer, played by Daryl Hannah, star of "Splash," "Wall Street," "Roxanne" and many other films. Koller won an Academy Award in 1991 for directing that year's best foreign film, "Journey of Hope."

"Hearts and Bones" also features Russell Means ("Last of the Mohicans"), Molly Ringwald ("The Breakfast Club"), Pete Postlethwaite ("The Usual Suspects") and Melinda Dillon, who was nominated for an Academy Award for her work in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "The Verdict."

In other words, this is a movie about rodeo with tons of credibility. It was written by Jamie Redford, son of actor/director Robert Redford.



Rosenblatt approached 1970 PRCA World Champion Bull Rider Gary Leffew, who had worked on other movie projects including "The Cowboy Way" and "Eight Seconds." Before long, Leffew's ranch in Nipomo, Calif., was turned into a movie set.

"I told them that the PBR is the hottest thing going and that they should shoot the PBR Finals to really see what the sport is all about," Leffew said. "After seeing what they did, this movie will show rodeo differently than you've seen it before. They really shot it interestingly, and up close and personal."

Leffew was impressed with Hannah and Sutherland.

"Daryl Hannah is a hand," Leffew said. "She did all the stunts and knows what she's doing on a horse. And Kiefer has his own ranch, so he knows what the game is all about. He's a rodeo fan."

Some PBR cowboys



stayed following the PBR Finals to do some more shooting for the film.

"Owen Washburn was riding Diamond G's Mailman in one shot," Leffew said. It was a great ride for the filming, but I

don't think Owen would probably say the same thing."

Washburn landed wrong, and was knocked out. PBR bull rider Tater Porter of Kissimmee, Fla., and Leffew's son Judd also rode after the Finals.

"I think it's going to be a great movie, very dramatic," Leffew said. "This kind of exposure can only help our sport. I've come to learn that the movie business and the rodeo business aren't all that different. Everybody works long, hard hours and everybody really bonds together."

The movie, which Rosenblatt said would be released this fall at the earliest, will feature the PBR prominently, as well as some of its sponsors such as Carhartt and Wrangler.

"The marketing of



top left page: Daryl Hannah has a love interest with two brothers, Marcus Thomas, pictured here as an ambitious Ely Braxton, and star Kiefer Sutherland, opposite, who plays his brother Hank, a bullfighter.

center left page: Announcer Donnie Gay plays himself in the movie, pictured here interviewing bull rider Ely Braxton. Note the PBR buckle on the actor.

top this page: Daryl Hannah plays Celia, a champion barrel racer, in the movie.

Note the Bud Light logo on the barrel. sidney baldwin photos

bottom: The Justin Sportsmedicine crew is featured in this scene from "Hearts & Bones" depicting a bloodied bullfighter (Sutherland) in the PBR Finals arena. Note the camera and director in background.

gary jensen photo



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## PI TOES HOLLYWOOD!

this sport is very impressive," Rosenblatt said. "It really does mirror the Super Bowl in a lot of ways, and the PBR team is extremely creative and talented. They were very helpful to us.

"Even though the sport is really rock and roll in the modern world, the competitors are still down-to-earth people, which was wonderful to see. Their word is their word, which is important, especially when you don't always see that in our world in L.A."

Rosenblatt admitted that shooting the bull riding scenes presented a challenge.

"We had to make it look as though the actors were actually riding, which isn't always easy," he said. "Also, when we used outdoor arenas and it would rain, we'd show up the next day ready to shoot. Not having been around rodeo, we didn't realize how muddy the arenas get. So we'd truck in sand to dry it out because, in this business, you only have so many days to shoot in the budget.

"At one point, we weren't sure whether to go to the National Finals Rodeo or the PBR Finals to shoot. (CEO) Randy Bernard and his team convinced us that the PBR was the purest form of bull riding and the way to go now, and he was right. We loved working with Gary and Randy."

Rosenblatt was asked to give an example of how his opinion of the sport has changed since he got involved with the project.

"We're at the PBR Finals, and this cowboy gets stepped on and obviously suffers a broken arm," Rosenblatt said. "Somebody asks the kid if he needs to get to the hospital. The kid says, 'Nah, it's just a broken arm. I'll stay and watch the rest.'

"These are some incredibly tough guys."

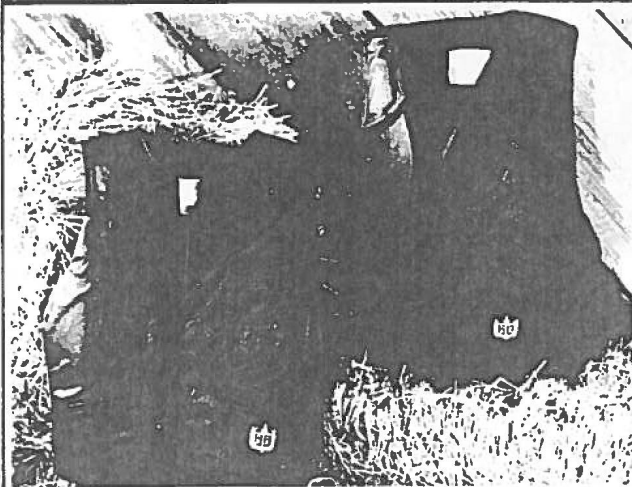
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Bullfighter Kiefer Sutherland, in make-up, takes direction from Academy Award-winning director Xavier Koller.

sidney baldwin photo