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A film with roots in Yamhill County

'From Kilimanjaro With Love' shot earlier this year at locations around Yamhill County

By [David Sale](#)

PORTLAND — For the bustling crowd of shoppers and neighborhood residents, the words "From Kilimanjaro With Love: Private Screening" emblazoned on the marquee of the Baghdad Theater would have little meaning.

But for the crowd of actors, crew members, their friends and families who gathered Oct. 13 for the first screening of the independent movie, it was the chance to view a project that had taken a year to complete.

Preproduction work on "Kilimanjaro" began last September, followed by a three-week shooting schedule this spring in rural Yamhill County. Postproduction and editing of the footage concluded in September.

The result marks the first completed feature film from Road's End Studios and a milestone for its members: writer-director Robert Bruce, his wife and executive producer Valere Bruce, and their daughter and production manager Corey Bruce.

"It's really kind of a family reunion," Robert Bruce said prior to starting the show. "This is only the second time that all the cast and crew have been in the same room — we haven't all got together since the first script read-through at Gibbs Community Center in Newberg."

The six-month turnaround from raw footage to finished movie was "standard," said Robert Bruce, a veteran of the television commercial industry.

"We didn't have a huge staff, but that's pretty good by the standards of the big Hollywood studios," Corey Bruce added.

"It was a lot of work," Valerie added. "We were working with composer Dave Deason (a retired music professor) on an original soundtrack, and we added the sound effects."

Like most films, the actors' dialogue is recorded on set, but incidental noises — everything from ice cubes clinking in a glass to the thump of a hero punching a villain — is added during the editing process.

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And more than a few punches are thrown in "Kilimanjaro," a comedic action-adventure in which a young woman travels to rural Oregon in search of a mysterious inheritance, trailed by a shady businessman and his gang of thugs.

Staging those punches was the responsibility of Harold Phillips, a Portland actor and choreographer who specializes in fight scenes.

"My job is to make it as non-dangerous as possible," he said. "Because the big fight scene was filmed right at the start of shooting, any injuries could have delayed the whole film. We had about a week to go through all the moves — it's really more of a dance than a fight."

The Bruces have submitted their movie to the Sundance Film Festival in hopes of finding a buyer, but the festival's bylaws prohibit offering a complete review.

Suffice to say that "Kilimanjaro" offers laughs and thrills, as well as touches normally found only in big-budget films — courtesy of Newberg's Precision Helicopter Services and Scio-based pyrotechnician Ikai Shelton.

"He did 'Pirates of the Caribbean,'" Robert Bruce said. "There's a lot of talent around here — most of the people involved are from the Portland area, which is why we held the screening here. It's really for their benefit."

Despite nearly filling the 600-seat Baghdad, while "Kilimanjaro" is on the festival circuit Road's End Films will not be able to charge admission to view the film, or sell DVD's.

"We're starting out at marketplace festivals, where studios and distributors show up — they want premieres," he said.

But seeing the results of their effort was quite an experience for those involved — especially actress Lindsay Crouse, who played the film's heroine.

"It was kind of scary — I hadn't seen any of the footage before, so it was a surprise," she said of watching herself on the silver screen. "Until now, I've mostly worked in theater, so this was my first real experience of movie-making."

Particularly difficult, Crouse admitted, was her character's nude scene — which, though not explicit, was a challenge to perform.

"It wasn't easy — it was really cold, for one thing," she said. "Then we had to redo it and it was harder to get psyched up the second time around."

On the whole, Crouse added: "I'd love to do something like this again. It was a wonderful experience, and a great bunch of people to work with."

The next production from Road's End Films is still up in the air, Robert Bruce said.

"I have two or three scripts, but they need funding," he said. "This (taking "Kilimanjaro" to festivals) is a piece of it — it's about networking and proving what you can do."

"The Road to Kilimanjaro" is one hour and 55 minutes in length, and is expected to receive a PG-13 rating for moderate violence, suggested nudity and some explicit language.

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