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## 'Barbarian Princess' film title raises some hackles in Hawaii

Producers banking that movie's 'ironic' name will appeal to wider audience

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Native Hawaiians yesterday expressed anger at the decision to call a soon-to-be-released feature film on Princess Ka'iulani's life "Barbarian Princess," and some went as far as to call the title a publicity stunt and an insult to the young royal's memory.

The producers of the film had scrapped the title in 2008, following outrage from some, but then returned to it. The 130-minute movie will make its world premiere at Hawai'i Theatre on Oct. 16 during the Hawaii International Film Festival. Interest in the film, HIFF officials say, is already high.

"Barbarian Princess," meant to be an ironic title, is what the princess was dubbed by some newspapers during her travels in the 1890s to the Mainland, where she astounded people with her grace, intelligence and beauty. The movie's producers say the title is meant to intrigue audiences, especially those outside of the Islands who wouldn't recognize her name or know her story.

"The ironic reference was done for a specific reason," said Roy Tijoe, a producer for the film and the co-owner of Island Film Group. He said concerns about the title "were coming from people who thought that we were intending a literal reference. Of course, that's not what we're doing."

But yesterday, several Native Hawaiian leaders said the title — ironic or not — is offensive.

"Because it's a painful thing, we don't care for irony," said Jon Osorio, a professor at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa's Kamakauokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies. "We really feel helpless to deal with producers ... who sensationalize our history in order to get to the wider audience, no matter what their intentions."

Hawai'i entertainer Palani Vaughan, a longtime critic of the project, said that the title of the movie is one of a host of concerns he has with the piece. Vaughan read the script for the film in February, and turned down the part of King Kalakaua. He said the movie distorts history and misses key facts.

"The real damage will be to the millions of viewers worldwide who will walk away (from the movie) with a truly inaccurate portrayal of our history, and that I resent. How do we undo that?" Vaughan said.

### 'so insulting'

Vicky Holt Takamine, president of the 'Ilio'ulaokalani Coalition, called the film's title an outrage.

"It's just so insulting to her," she said. "I don't know any Hawaiian who would agree to that (title)."

The producers of the film scrapped "Barbarian Princess" last year, in an effort to ease tensions.

Other working titles for the film were "Princess Ka'iulani" and "The Last Princess."

Tijoe said the producers returned to "Barbarian Princess" after long consideration.

"It was a way to bring to the fore what had happened in the past," he said. Tijoe acknowledged that the film title is "provocative," and he also said part of the reason "Barbarian Princess" was picked was because of fears the other working titles wouldn't have a commercial appeal outside of Hawai'i.

"Our intentions are honorable here. Certainly no offense is intended," he said.

Ric Galindez, another producer for the film and also co-owner of Island Film Group, said the film shouldn't be judged by its title.

"We hope that people from Hawai'i will see it and enjoy it," he said, adding that the film is intended "to tell the rest of the world" and "pique people's interest" in the story of Princess Ka'iulani.

Former Hawai'i resident Q'orianka Kilcher was cast as Ka'iulani for the film.

Kilcher portrayed Pocahontas in the 2005 film "The New World."

Princess Ka'iulani, who died at age 23, witnessed the overthrow of the monarchy in 1893.

The movie on her life was shot in part at 'Iolani Palace and cost about \$8 million to produce. Shooting wrapped up in 2008, and the producers hope to secure a distribution deal by early next year.

Chuck Boller, executive director of the Hawaii International Film Festival, said he is getting lots of inquiries already from people interested in seeing the biopic. Tickets for the HIFF showing will go on sale Oct. 1 for HIFF members and sponsors, and Oct. 5 for the general public, Boller said.

He said he wouldn't be surprised if the 1,400-seat Hawai'i Theatre is sold out.

"It's been an important film and people really want to see it," Boller said.

The world premiere will coincide with Princess Ka'iulani's birthday.

Boller said he has seen the film and enjoyed it, calling it "realistic" and "accurate."

He added that the title of the movie will make sense to those who see it.

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