

FilmDistrict, TriStar hit the waves with Soul Surfer

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FilmDistrict is partnering with Sony on the true-life story *Soul Surfer* starring AnnaSophia Robb, Dennis Quaid, Helen Hunt and Carrie Underwood in her feature debut.

The film will go out wide through TriStar Pictures on April 15, 2011. FilmDistrict will oversee the marketing campaign on the story of competitive surfer Bethany Hamilton, who lost her arm in a shark attack and went on to become a champion. Lorraine Nicholson, Kevin Sorbo and Jeremy Sumpter also star. Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisitions picked up North American and "substantial" international rights prior to the commencement of production.

Enticing Entertainment and Island Film Group financed the project, which is a production of Mandalay Vision, Brookwell McNamara Entertainment and Life's A Beach Entertainment.

Sean McNamara directed from a screenplay he co-wrote with Michael Berk, Douglas Schwartz and Deborah Bonann Schwartz, with additional writing by Ron Bass, Jen Smolka and Kara Holden. The source material is Bethany Hamilton's memoir *Soul Surfer: A True Story Of Faith, Family And Fighting To Get Back On The Board*.

"My family and I are honoured to be the subject of such an amazing film," Hamilton said. "My hope is that the story continues to inspire people around the world to overcome the challenges that face them."

David Zelon, Douglas Schwartz, David Brookwell, Sean McNamara and Roy "Dutch" Hofstetter produced and David Tice and Dominic Ianno served as executive producers.

"The world needs a hero right now," primary financier and executive producer David Tice said. "When I met Bethany and her family, I felt compelled to share her extraordinary life on the big screen."

"Steve Bersch and I immediately responded to the honesty of Bethany's story and its universal message of courage and perseverance," FilmDistrict CEO Peter Schlessel, who initiated and approved the production with Bersch while at Sony, said.

"*Soul Surfer* embodies an absolutely amazing story, wonderfully told by the filmmakers, and we're thrilled to play a part in bringing this story to audiences this spring," Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisitions president Bersch said.

"This movie, with its winning story and cast, is a real audience pleaser," FilmDistrict's president of theatrical distribution Bob Berney said. "It's the perfect family film for the spring break season."