

Baton Rouge

Christian LIFE

Magazine



JARRED COATES
His Mission After God's Not Dead

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GREAT NEWS!

God's Not Dead!

by Beth Townsend

Not only is this the exciting Easter headline in churches on Easter Sunday, but for much of 2014, it was the headline at box offices all across America.

Having impacted just over seven million souls, eternity has been impacted forever.

"I knew there was a market for good quality films. I felt success was going to happen with God's Not Dead," says co-producer and Baton Rouge native Jarred Coates. The success of the movie is proof of this talented film-maker's instincts. Having ranked sixth in the box office revenues in the Christian genre, it has respectfully taken its place among other Hollywood releases.

Even though it was a lower budget film with a limited release, the outstanding results speak for themselves. 71 million combined U.S. and International box office tickets sold. 1.5 million DVD's sold at launch. It was ranked the number one independent film of 2014.

In case you missed it, this is a brief summary. Present-day college freshman and devout Christian, Josh Wheaton (Shane Harper), finds his faith challenged on his first day of philosophy class by the dogmatic

and argumentative Professor Radisson (Kevin Sorbo). Radisson begins class by informing students that they will need to disavow, in writing, the existence of God on that first day, or face a failing grade.

As other students in the class begin scribbling the words "God Is Dead" on pieces of paper as instructed, Josh finds himself at a crossroads, having to choose between his faith and his future. Josh offers a nervous refusal,

provoking an irate reaction from his smug professor. Radisson assigns him a daunting task: if Josh will not admit that "God Is Dead," he must prove God's existence by presenting well-researched, intellectual arguments and evidence over the course of the semester, and engage Radisson in a head-to-head debate in front of the class. If Josh fails to convince his classmates of God's existence, he will fail the course and hinder his lofty academic goals. With almost no one in his corner, Josh wonders if he can really fight for what he believes. Can he actually prove the existence of God? Wouldn't it just be easier just to write "God Is Dead" and put the whole incident behind him?

If you haven't seen the film, it's worth the time. "It's all God who did this anyway," says Coates. "If God prepares me to do films as He has called me to do, whether successful or not, it's because of Him. He opened the doors. He gets the glory. It's not about me." Coates is humbled by the success. "We felt like it would impact people's lives. It's great to see that when you spend so much time on



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Kevin Sorbo and Shane Harper from *God's Not Dead*

“It’s all God who did this anyway,” says Coates referring to his film and his passion to create. “If God prepares me to do films as He has called me to do, whether successful or not, it’s because of Him.”

something and put in so much effort, then it reaches so many. It’s humbling.”

His childhood served as a training ground for making Christian movies. Born and raised in Baton Rouge, his grandmother was his biggest Christian influence. Each summer after a couple of weeks with her, “we had been infused with the gospel,” he laughed. “We went to church, we went to church camps, she was the plumb line of the family,”

he recalled while remembering the celebration of her life that had taken place during her funeral last year. “We knew if you couldn’t tell Granny what you were doing, you shouldn’t be doing it!”

Having a strong family background, Jarred attended Dunham School, followed by LSU, then onto Bethany Church’s Ministers Training Institute (MTI). When he and his wife at the

time were about to have their third child, he wrestled with a desire to attend film school. Stepping out in faith, they agreed he should pursue that dream. In 2003 he went to Full Sail Film School in Orlando to immerse himself in 8-16 hours a day of classes required to earn another degree that would allow him to pursue what God was calling him to do.

Vast experience would serve as additional training ground for his

career. During his time at LSU he became a committed Christian, which led to him get involved in Living Waters at Christian Life Academy. “That was great foundational learning for me. Leaders from that group have gone out and started churches all over the country and world. Our leaders, Rusty Domingue and John Seibeling, had a vision for missions, and we helped plant churches and work in orphanages all over the world.” This group was instrumental in giving me a world vision for Christ!

From there he became an associate pastor in Memphis and worked in the inner city and missions. “I didn’t like being in the church offices, I wanted to be out ‘in the world’ doing what was needed.”

His desire to make films started when Star Wars was released in 1977. Fascinated with the phenomena, he recognized the cutting edge quality that made the films so successful. “Back then, making films meant going to Hollywood or New York, so I wasn’t really driven at the time.”



Jarred and Lisa Arnold with Gretchen Carleson at FOX

While an associate pastor in Memphis, Jarred’s work was intense. “God was getting me prepared with all kinds of training, I was exposed to a lot.” That included working in overseas missions, inner city ministry, and working with inmates in prison. “In prison ministries, I was working with guys on death row as well as those who’d committed white collar crimes. There was a time when I was overseeing five facilities that worked with various levels of inmates. That helped prepare me for the film industry, because it has so many moving parts.”

In film school, his vision became clearer and his passion was ignited. He became comfortable with God’s plan to use him wherever He leads. “I don’t care where I am, I’ll talk about Jesus. He’s placed me out in the world where others don’t know him.”

Coates built his company, Red Entertainment, on simple principles and quality work. “On our sets, we treat people well, that’s just the Jesus in us.” Often the budgets are lower, with



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From the upcoming movie, *Caged*

smaller salaries than large features, but people want to work with us. “We do films that have significant meaning and value, so we want the people who work with us and view our films, to walk away feeling inspired,” he observed.

Jarred is also daddy to three precious children. As a carpooling father, he uses that time to instruct his children as the Lord teaches him.

Recalling a recent conversation, he used an illustration to demonstrate priorities. “Why would we or should we be

proud or boastful if God rewards us with a big job, or successful movie, or athletic talents? It’s God who opened the doors and gave us those blessings,

so its for His glory.” Jarred went on to note that the key to happiness and joy is found in doing what God has called you to do. “He places something in our hearts, who cares if it’s something big or small, you will find peace working in that lane or area!”

His next film, *Caged*, will serve as a call to action to our nation. *Caged* is

lies in its purpose: to move a generation to act and bring an end to oppression. It’s more than a film, it’s a movement aimed at raising awareness of human trafficking and supporting the many ministries around the world already fighting Human Trafficking. It will also aid in connecting anti-trafficking organizations, equip parents, schools and churches, to aid in prevention and

assist in eradicating trafficking.

With an accredited and impressive cast, this movie matters. Human Trafficking generates \$9.5

billion yearly in the U.S. and \$32 billion worldwide. An estimated 27 million people are enslaved worldwide. 1.2 million children are trafficked each year.

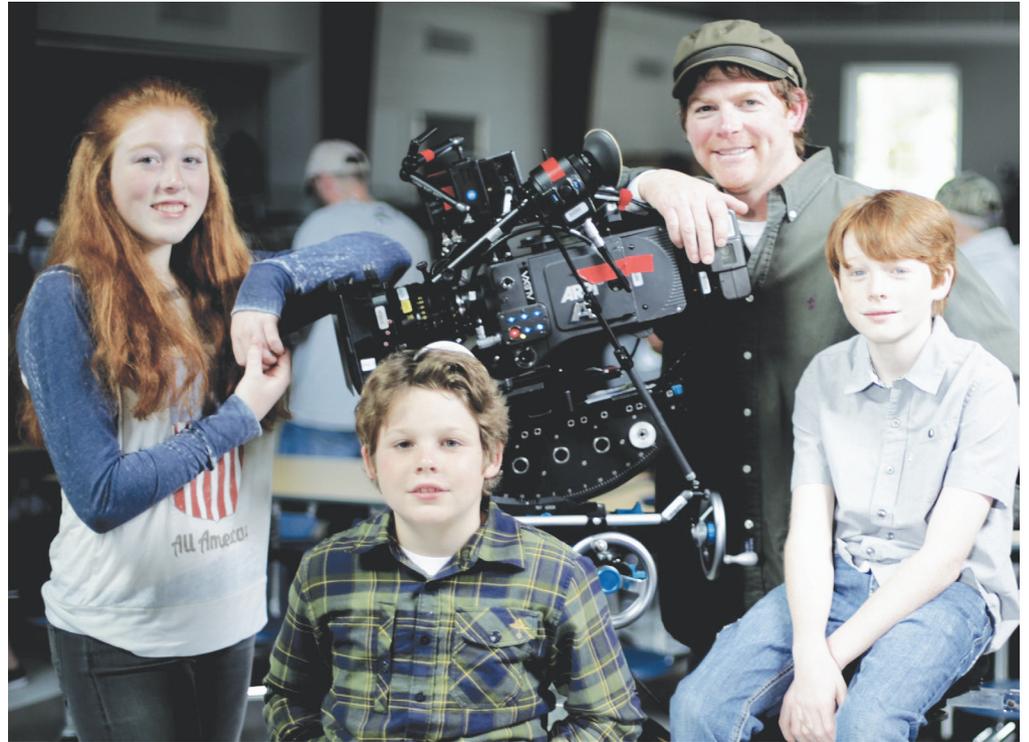
The power of this movie lies in its purpose: to move a generation to act and bring an end to oppression. It’s more than a film, it’s a movement aimed at raising awareness of human trafficking...

produced by Jarred and his partner/director Lisa Arnold. It opens in the fall 2015, with a starting release in over 500 theaters. The power of this movie

Human trafficking is the world’s fastest growing global crime. And it’s not just over-seas; it’s in our neighborhoods.

Early reviews are promising. “I know God will bless this film through all of your hard work and vocal support of the movement to stop human trafficking around the world and inside the U.S.” says Scott Rolfe of The Dove Foundation.

“It was eye opening and very inspiring to hear from those you brought to us (at the set visit). I am blown away at this issue and the fact that it is happening in our country and even our city,” says Scott Mills of Lifeway Films.



Jarred and his children (Ireland, Garrett, Gabriel) on set

“This film is a crossover film, it has faith elements, but it is a film for everyone to enjoy and be inspired.” We hope that every person who sees it will walk away and say, ‘I can do something about that.’ It can be something small and use our influence, but there are so many ways to get involved to help stop Human Trafficking,” says Coates.

“This is a trilogy, and the first one is a cliffhanger,” smiles Jarred. Seeing the movie is one way we can participate. Getting the message out and educating the public on current issues is paramount to energizing the Body of Christ with a call to action.

Making movies has led to a heart that looks beyond the set and at the humanity of people. “When we do a film, half the ministry is taking place while shooting, that is why we don’t require everyone on the team to be a Christian. I want people to see Jesus

in me and the stories we are telling. I’m not perfect, I make mistakes. But we as Christians should not shun one another because of our mistakes.”

In discussing ways to unite our Body of Christ in Baton Rouge, his advice is simple yet practical. “I think we can get too caught up in who believes what and various doctrines. Jesus said ‘lift me up and I’ll draw men to me.’ We are all different. It’s all Jesus and what He is doing. How we worship Him does not matter. It’s about who He is and what He as done for us.”

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