



Coming Soon to a Stadium Near You -

North East Ohio is buzzing with the greatly anticipated September 2011 release of **The Believeland Eagles**

. Written and directed by the team of Holmgren and Heckert, and produced by Walrus Films, the movie is set in the fictional hardscrabble blue collar town of Believeland. The movie details the lives of Believeland sports fans and their dreams of a return to football glory. Ownership tries in vain to put a competitive team on the field, often by attempting to follow other, more successful franchises instead of forging their own identity. Movie Snoops reports the script is “truly a celebration of the human condition, and a remarkable study of the resiliency of long-suffering Believeland fans.”

Holmgren has broken somewhat from movie making tradition by either casting relative unknowns or older character actors in key roles. Newcomer Pat Shurmur will play the lead, while 60 year old Dick Jauron will have a supporting part. It is noteworthy that both Shurmur and Jauron are products of the **Andy Reid Actors Studio**, a Philadelphia based workshop which trains actors and directors in **the west**

coast philosophy

, much as the more famous

Actors Studio in Manhattan

espouses the technique of “method acting”.

The Reid Studio, as it is now known, was originally founded by Mike Holmgren, and claims writer/director Tom Heckert, as well as executive producer Gil Haskell, as members.

It is rumored that Holmgren himself will play a part in the film, but at this time it is not known if his role will be merely a cameo or if he will write himself into the script with a much larger part.

The movie is another installment of the **Believeland** series, although this is the initial release under the direction of Holmgren and Heckert. The first movie,

The Believeland Forty-Niners

, was released in 1999 by Y-Town Mafia productions and was directed by Dwight Clark. The premise was a “return to glory” by building an older team of unwanted veteran players. The movie was a box office hit although one critic described it’s making as “like being the conductor on a runaway train.” That film was quickly followed by

The Believeland Hurricanes

, which was directed by Pete Garcia and starred Butch Davis. Filmed on location in northern Ohio, much of the cast and crew were brought in from Miami, Florida. The most successful of the series, the film was actually nominated for a post season award at the Pittsburgh film festival but was not able to deliver. Many critics were confused by the sad ending of the film, which was never completed after Davis abruptly walked off the set before shooting wrapped.

The Believeland Patriots was released in September of 2005. Financed by Randy Lerner, the making of the film, which starred Romeo Crennel, was marred by production delays and political battles between Executive Producer John Collins and Director Phil Savage. The friction led to the eventual resignation of Collins and the film was then co-produced by Lerner and Savage, with unfortunate consequences for the finished product. The plot of the film appeared sound in theory – hire a coordinator from a successful franchise and have him bring a few veteran players to implement “the way”. Unfortunately, Crennel was unconvincing in the lead role. One positive of the **Believeland Patriots** was the breakout performance by actor Derek Anderson, who won critical acclaim for his role of a not-too-bright quarterback who leads his team to the doorstep of the playoffs before failing miserably. It is interesting to note that Anderson has never been able to recapture his screen magic in subsequent roles.

The movie **Mangeni** is a controversial outlier of the **Believeland** series. This independently produced film was again financed by Randy Lerner, but all of the production and direction, as well as the lead role, fell to actor Eric Mangini, who was unprepared for the responsibility and initially floundered. One critic commented the film “reminds me of the Joe six pack version of **Being John Malkovich**

, except not as good.” It was an experiment which was unable to deliver at the box office and received mixed reviews from critics. Some praised the film for “its determination and professionalism” while others noted it was “rather dry and slow moving without much action to hold the viewers attention.”

The Believeland Eagles - 2011 Summer Blockbuster

Written by {ga=mattvan1}

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It is rumored that **The Believeland Eagles** will be the last installment of the rather unsuccessful series. This version is reported to have a faster tempo with more action. The hope is that this film will be more uplifting than those previous, which were sometimes described as “just so depressing, you wanted to leave the theater”, and “like watching

Requiem for a Dream

with a bag of ‘ludes and a bottle of cheap vodka.”

Moldy Tomatoes rates the series 80% moldy on the suckitude scale. Some insiders predict this film will go straight to DVD, which would provide an ignominious end to the franchise.

There is one school of thought that espouses the “system”, in this case the **west coast philosophy**, is more important than the actors’ skill, and under the right direction can deliver stunning performances. This of course runs contrary to the production of most films which hope to sign experienced star power in leading roles. Holmgren is certainly not the first successful actor to move behind the camera, but this will be his first effort as executive producer as well as director. Only time will tell if the

west coast philosophy

with an unknown cast can make

The

Believeland Eagles

a critical success.

So keep your auditions for somebody

Who hasn't got so much to lose

'Cause you can tell by the lines I'm reciting

That I've seen that movie too

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