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POP

Bewitching the big screen

Film adaptation of *Rebecca's Rising* in the making



Jack Heath. Courtesy photo.

By Kelly Sennott
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Author, WMUR vet and radio personality Jack Heath is looking to add Hollywood to his resume.

His publisher Pressque Publishing recently signed a film deal with Wonderland Pictures to adapt his very successful first novel, *Rebecca's Rising*, to the big screen.

The filmmakers are still in the beginning stages — Michael DeRoker, founder of Wonderland Pictures, will lead the adaptation, but he declined a phone interview because he didn't want to say something that would affect the project later on. Heath and Sherrie Wilkolaski of Pressque Publishing, however, are quite hopeful about what this means for the books, and potentially, for New Hampshire.

"What I'm excited about is that they're looking to shoot a great deal of the movie in Portsmouth. We're not known as a movie state because we don't do tax credits," Heath said in a phone interview.

DeRoker learned about the books by chance; Doug Armitage, who is also with Wonderland Pictures, was tipped off by his mother about *Rebecca's Rising* and its big-screen capability. Armitage, a Keene State grad, looked into his mother's suggestion and showed it to DeRoker.

It took little convincing; DeRoker thinks that Heath's books will translate to

film fantastically.

"From the moment I started reading, I was drawn into, then held captive by, Jack's exceptional storytelling. I knew then that I had to do whatever it took to get involved and help turn this great story into a great film," DeRoker said in a short article on Heath's radio website, jack-heathradio.com.

This fall season is monumental for Heath in general: in addition to this film deal, Heath's second book in the Salem witch trilogy, *Chain of Souls*, was just released.

The trilogy follows a reporter, John Andrews, who's trying to uncover the truth about the Salem witch trials. History tells us that the accused "witches" were tried and hanged so long ago, but both *Rebecca's Rising* and *Chain of Souls* offer a modern-day plot twist: What if the accusers, the judges of the Salem witch trials, were the real witches?

"It's very exciting; however, there's a lot to consider when you're approached by a studio," said Sherrie Wilkolaski, the book's publisher.

"Authors need to be sure that the deal is right for them, not just in the moment, but long-term. We're extremely lucky to be working with Michael DeRoker. ... He is as passionate about the storyline as we are, and he's committed to making the film in New Hampshire, which is wonderful," Wilkolaski said in an email.

Wilkolaski felt there was a potential film in *Rebecca's Rising* the first time she read it. Part of it, she said, has to do with Heath's writing; you can tell he has a background in television.

"His experience as a broadcaster comes through because he's trained to write for the ear," Wilkolaski said. "We're already working on book three of the trilogy and hope to see the entire series on film."

Heath is pleasantly surprised at how well his first books have taken off.

"Apparently, the paranormal is quite successful in the movie business. This book has a good degree of paranormal activity, but I'm not the one writing the script, so I don't know the level of horror that will be in it," Heath said.

"When I was writing, I was really just looking to write a fun, fictional twist to the history I read about growing up," Heath said. "I had no idea that it would be suitable for a movie. I just wanted it to be entertaining." 🍷

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