

# RECONNECT *ing*

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

## JOHN FINLEY

By: Chris Roden

Thanks to a door opened by his first movie, John Finley will star in "Love, Courage and the Battle of Bushy Run."

Five years ago, Lebanon native Finley, known professionally as J. Michael Finley, starred in his first movie, "I Can Only Imagine" with screen veterans Dennis Quaid and Cloris Leachman.

The film with a \$7 million budget grossed \$86 million worldwide. Some of this success has rubbed off on Finley.

"It certainly opened some doors and got me in front of the right people," Finley said.

In "Love, Courage and the Battle of Bushy Run," Finley portrays Capt. John Graham, the leader of the Scottish Highlanders, who fights alongside Col. Henry Bouquet in the Battle of Bushy Run in 1763.

It was an actual battle that took place shortly after the French and Indian War ended when Ottawa Chief Pontiac began a preemptive strike against the English since he feared a reprisal from them for helping the French.

"He's a guy that's a little skeptical. The colonel wants to take some risks to help these people out, and my character isn't as willing to take those risks," Finley said.

However, one risk both he and, consequently, Finley were willing to take was horseback riding while wearing a kilt and a bonnet.

The wardrobe department provided Finley with lime green and neon orange boxer shorts to wear underneath his kilt.

"Every once in a while, we had to redo something. If I toppled off my horse, everyone could see my bright neon orange underwear," Finley said.

Although not an accomplished rider, Finley still had a good time on horseback in costume.

"Being up on a horse in a kilt is actually a pretty wonderful feeling, the socks and everything and the boots. I had a blast. I did

fall off a horse more than once, and I had a couple of scars over that, but overall it was a great experience," Finley said.

The movie was shot 30 minutes southeast of Atlanta, which Finley said has become a popular production hub in the last 10 years for movies and TV shows like "The Walking Dead" and "Ozark."

He spent much of his shooting schedule in the sun.

"You get up super early, and you pretty much shoot until the sun goes down. That's your clock. Toward the end of the day you start to feel everybody stressing out because it's the sun's starting to go down, and that's when everyone starts to get nervous because we're a little behind, etc.," Finley said.

Finley said the movie left its mark on him. He sliced his nose open with his sword in a fall from his horse.

He said he was nervous that he might be replaced since it was early in the film. However, the director shot a scene with Finley being injured and kept on film-making.

"I got a lot of razzing for that, being the only guy that fell off a horse, but hey, you know when you're going 100 percent and you're in character and you're in a kilt, what can you do?" he said.

Finley said his theatre work will continue with an East Coast regional gig coming up with no kilt-wearing involved.

He is waiting for "Love, Courage and the Battle of Bushy Run" to be completed and an opening date set. He plans to be more active on social media via his Instagram account, @john\_michael\_finley.

Meanwhile, he and his wife Elizabeth Doran are house hunting in New Jersey, raising their son and settling down to see what their lives look like in the post-pandemic everyday and entertainment worlds.

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Left, John Finley spent time riding Whiskey and other horses that looked like Whiskey during the battle scenes of "Love, Courage and the Battle of Bushy Run." Below, Finley is joined by Edward Gelhaus in front with Christopher Paul Smith, Chris Myers and Tom Connolly, who is billed as the lead, at their back.



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