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'Resistance' adaptation gets backing

Amit Gupta writing, directing WWII film

By Stuart Kemp

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CANNES -- Many hands make light work.

The planned big-screen adaptation of Owen Sheers' World War II novel "Resistance," from Brit indie producer Richard Holmes, has attracted backing from Germany and Wales.

Holmes ("Eden Lake") is taking up arms with Al Munteanu's Square One in Germany and Film Agency Wales to develop an adaptation from writer-director Amit Gupta, who also will direct. Sheers is collaborating on the screenplay.

"Resistance" is set in an alternative 1944 where Russia has fallen to Nazi Germany and the D-Day landings have failed. With Britain partly occupied by German forces, a group of Welsh villagers wake to discover that their husbands have mysteriously disappeared.

"The immensely castable German leading roles give us a compelling reason to get involved," Munteanu said.

Added Pauline Burt of Film Agency Wales: "We were keen to support Owen Sheers' feature screenplay debut, having already proven he is a unique writer with a distinctive voice."

The film will be executive produced by Richard Staniforth.

Holmes said in Cannes that the partnership at script stage "vindicates" his belief that the book has "real cinematic scope."

The producer also is developing "Rise of the Appliances," a project from U.K. screenwriting comedy duo Rob Sprackling and John Smith for Sprackling to direct. Set in a world where you can no longer trust your toaster, "Appliances" is being written now.

Other highlights from Holmes' development slate include a Paul Hills directorial project, "Seat of Storms." Written by Brian Nash, the film is based on the true story of a heroic British lifeboat crew.