ABAC faculty member Brian Ray occupies a key role in a new movie which has its preview screening in Fitzgerald at the Grand Theatre on July 11.

Movie Debut for ABAC’s Brian Ray on July 11

TIFTON—For the past 40 years, acting on stage in theatre productions has been the adrenaline that fueled the fire of life for Dr. Brian Ray. The faculty member in the School of Liberal Arts at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College has been a part of over 50 productions.
In all that time in front of the lights, Ray has never seen his image on the big screen in a movie theater. That’s about to change. Ray occupies a pivotal role in the Sidney Bryant film, “Surrender,” which premieres on July 11 at the Grand Theatre in Fitzgerald.

“Working on a movie is totally different from working on a play,” Ray said. “The acting takes place on location instead of on a stage. There is also limited rehearsal. Actors learn their lines on their own before coming to the set. Then there are often changes to the script before the actual filming begins. Memorizing lines and dealing with the changes is a real challenge. Fortunately, most of the scenes are relatively short.”

Ray said the preview screening of “Surrender” is open to the general public with tickets available at a cost of $12 for adults and $8 for children. Tickets can be purchased at the Grand Theatre or at www.sidneybryant.com. Doors open at 5 p.m., and the screening begins at 6 p.m.

“Complete with red carpet and limousines, it’s going to be done up right like a regular preview screening of a movie,” Ray said. “And it all happens right there in the heart of Fitzgerald.”

Ray said it’s a one-night only event, and the possibility of future showings at other theaters is still in the planning stages.

“We have a tentative plan to shop it to a couple of major distributors but since this is the first major film to be completed by this company, it has to prove itself first,” Ray said. “Future release for multiple showings will be based on whatever happens with potential distribution rights.”
Ray plays the part of Jack Gibbons, a retired police officer pressed back into service as the director of the special operations division put together to address “difficult” crimes. The faith-based movie allows Ray’s character to serve in a mentoring role for another police officer who is struggling to rediscover his religious beliefs.

Filming the movie was quite an eye-opening experience for Ray, who directs the Baldwin Players Theatre Troupe at ABAC and teaches classes ranging from composition to world literature to fundamentals of acting.

“There’s usually a quick walk-through of the scene to be filmed, and then the director starts the cameras,” Ray said. “Usually, it takes several tries to get the scene right and to get enough camera angles. We did one scene close to 30 times and another scene where there was only one line of dialogue, we did only three times.

“Virtually nothing is filmed in the order that it appears in the movie. The scenes get filmed in the order that locations, actors, and other logistics are available so everything jumps around a lot. The actors don’t get a sense of the whole story until the director and film editors put it all together for the final version of the film which the audience will enjoy.”

Ray said this presents a challenge for the makeup artists, particularly when they are responsible for actors who “age” during the movie.

“One evening we shot a scene from the early part of the film and then one from the latter part because the location was only available for one night,” Ray said. “I got ‘aged’ by the makeup people between scenes.”
Ray, who has taught at ABAC for the last 10 years, said he enjoys both film and the stage but it’s hard for him to turn his back on his first love.

“I enjoy both, and I will continue to work in both mediums if I can,” Ray said. “My first love is the stage because of the live audience and the immediate interaction the actors get from the audience. However, the intensity and amazing possibilities of film make it very attractive.”