KANE ACTION TEAM

GATLING

PRESS KIT



GATLING

A MATT KANE FILM



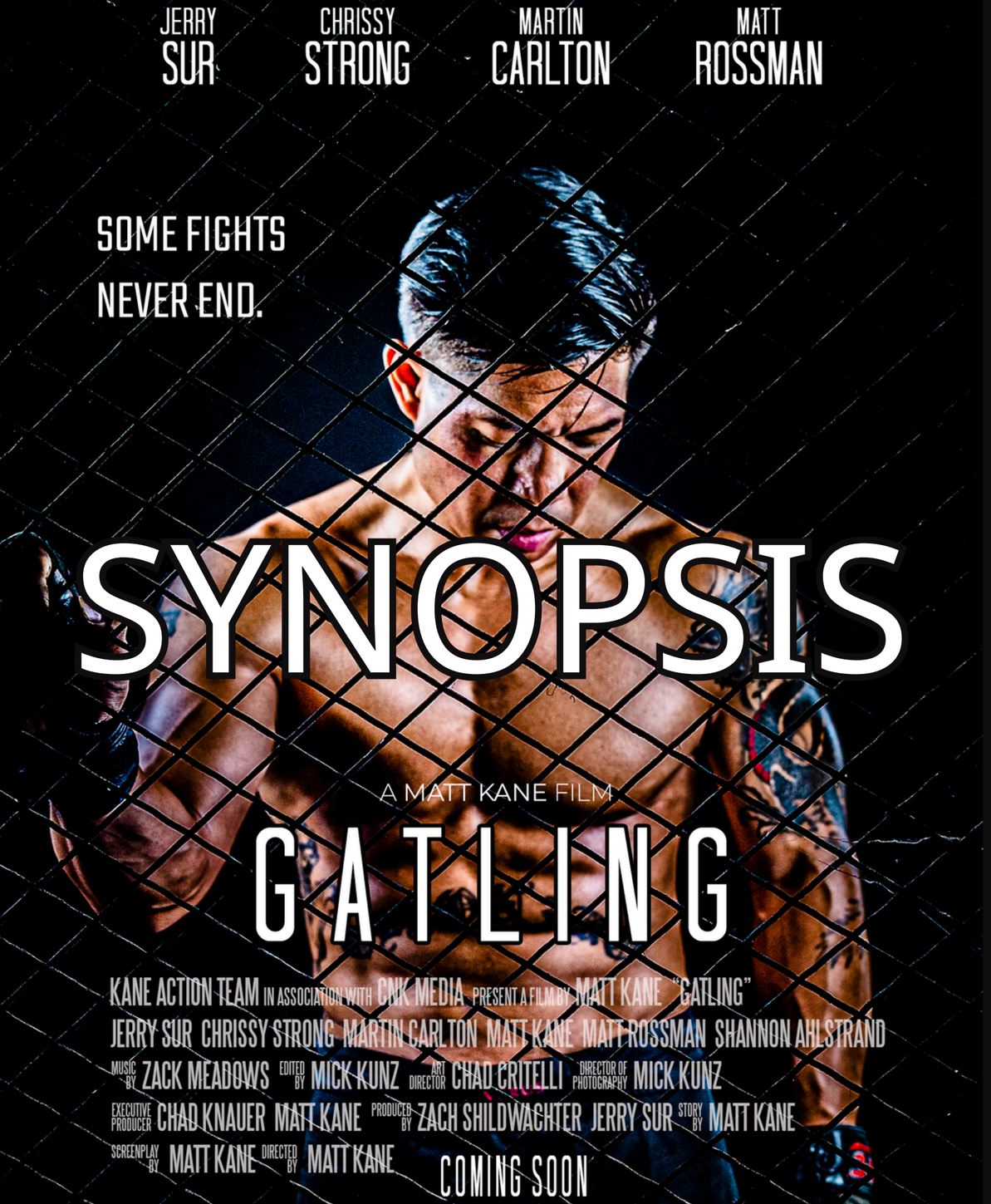


SOME FIGHTS
NEVER END.

LOGLINE

A retired MMA fighter, grieving over the death of his young daughter, decides to enter the cage one more time to fight a former friend.





SYNOPSIS

Former MMA champion and once a feared force in the cage, Gabriel "The Gatling" Hawthorne (Jerry Sur) has spent years in self-imposed exile, drowning in grief after the tragic loss of his young daughter. But when an old friend and training partner-turned-rival publicly disparages his daughter's memory and challenges him to a fight, Gabriel is pushed to the brink. The fight also comes with a significant payday—one he desperately needs.

As old wounds are reopened and buried emotions come to the surface, he must decide if this battle is about vengeance, redemption, or something deeper. As the cage door closes, he prepares for the battle of his life—not just against his opponent, but against his own demons.

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY

MATT KANE

Matt Kane is a filmmaker, martial artist, and educator based in Akron, Ohio. From an early age, he was drawn to entertaining, storytelling, and the power of escapism. Inspired by action and martial arts icons like Bruce Lee, Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Jean-Claude Van Damme, he developed a deep appreciation for films that blend physical intensity with raw, human emotion.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Exercise Science from the University of Akron and a master's degree in Sport and Recreation Management from Kent State University. He is also the owner and founder of Paragon Martial Arts & Fitness in Akron, Ohio, where he teaches and inspires students through the discipline of martial arts.

Beyond filmmaking, he is an experienced martial artist and instructor, viewing both disciplines as paths to self-discovery and growth. He believes that, like martial arts, filmmaking is about pushing limits, overcoming obstacles, and exploring the depths of human experience. His work is driven by primal emotions—love, loss, death, survival, and hope—seeking to create action and dramatic films that challenge audiences intellectually and emotionally.

Having recently completed his first feature film, Gatling, he is committed to redefining action and dramatic cinema, proving that these genres can be both thrilling and deeply meaningful.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2019, a 10 year-old student of mine passed away. I worked as a martial arts instructor and I grew very close with him and his father. I trained them three times a week for four years. They were like family. The loss shattered my heart into thousands of tiny slivers. Speaking at the funeral, being a pall-bearer and seeing a child in a casket does something to you. Through the grieving process I started to write. Emotions, feelings, vivid imagery, whatever. These writings eventually became the genesis of the script for *Gatling*. Growing up practicing martial arts and idolizing action stars and worshiping action movies, I've always wanted to make a martial arts film. This union formed the conception of *Gatling*.

With most martial arts and action films, the plot usually follows a story of revenge and let's be honest, it's really just a clothesline for hanging all the cool action set pieces and fight scenes. With *Gatling*, we wanted the story to be central. This raw, visceral, emotional, and deeply-human story. A story we can all relate to: loss and the subsequent grief. Don't get me wrong though, there's still kick-ass, brutal action throughout. It's just that this action is character-driven and motivated (as it should be!).

A core idea behind *Gatling* is that grief fucking sucks. It sucks to lose someone you love. But, it obliterates our rational mind when it is a child that we lose. That shouldn't happen. When it does, how do we go on with life? Can we? What do we do? Where can we find solace? Drugs? Alcohol? Sex? Violence? Can we find closure? Closure is for doors, not humans. Are we able to find a modicum of hope, a tiny light in the vast sea of darkness? Can we forgive ourselves when we feel we are to blame for contributing to that loss? When everything is against us, when everything inside of us wants to give up, can we step through that cage door and fight with everything we have? Then, maybe we can find some peace.






DOES IT EVER GET
ANY EASIER ?

THE CAST AND CREW



GABRIEL “THE GATLING” HAWTHORNE

Played by Jerry Sur

Jerry Sur an actor, director, stuntman and artist. He was born into a military family in Southern California and later joined the U.S. Air Force during college. After the military, he relocated to Ohio where he got his break-out role in MDI Film’s martial arts action thriller “Wu Xia - A Martial Arts Tango”. Jerry went on to land other lead roles in films such as Naples Entertainment’s “M.I.C.E. In The Wall”, 3 Digital Rock’s “Assassin’s Game”, The Freke Showe’s “Squatchin’”, and more recently MDI Film’s “Bullets, Brothers, and Blood”.

Off set, Jerry enjoys spending time with his son and daughters and animals, DIY projects, landscaping, drawing and photography.



MAYA

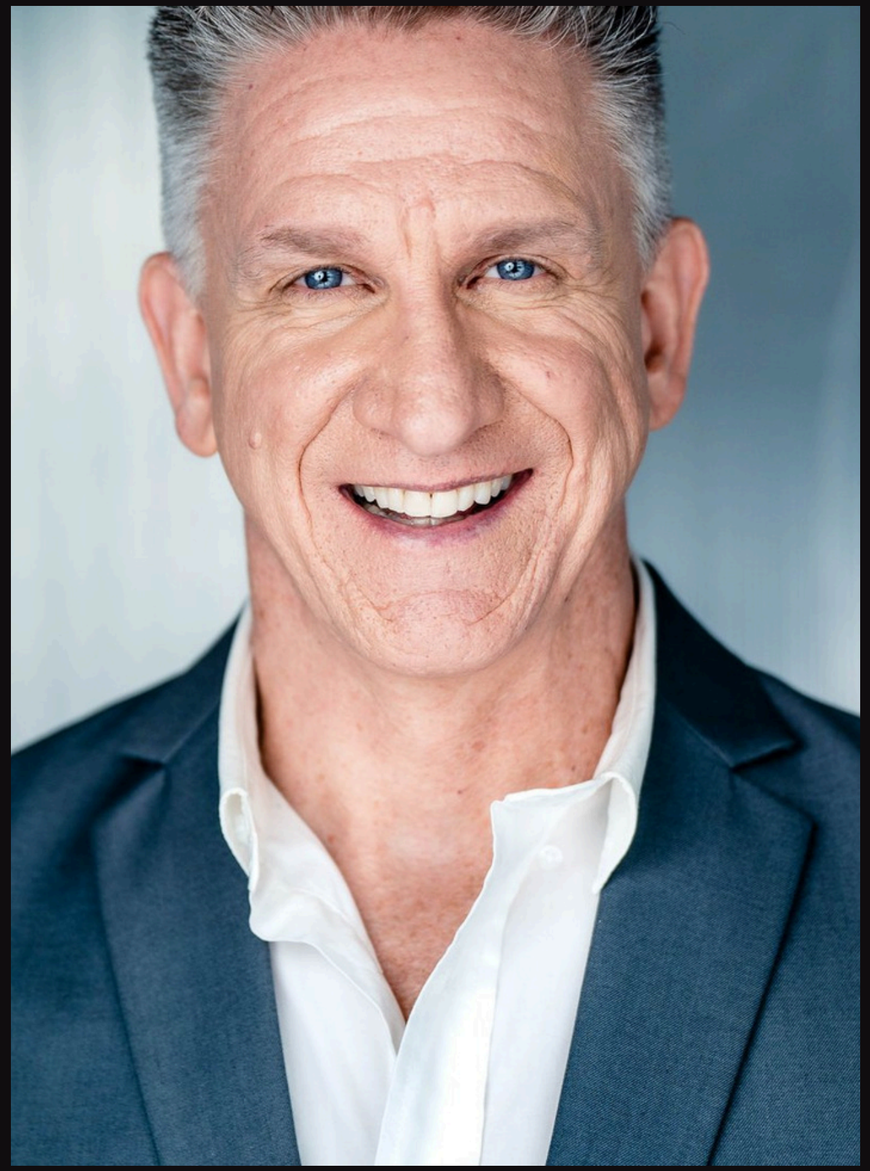
Played by Chrissy Strong

Chrissy Strong is an emerging, indie singer/songwriter, musician and actor from Akron, Ohio.

A self-taught musician, her songwriting is rooted in soulful, edgy piano ballads with a raw and free-flowing approach that offer a tender and haunting reflection on encounters with love and longing, fear and desperation—and the many forms they take.

In 2020, Strong released her debut single Send Angels as well as booking a role as Red Cross in Noah Baumbach's feature film, White Noise.

Since then, Chrissy has signed to three major talent labels from Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania and has been in countless commercials, indi films, student films, feature films, and has graced the theatre stage. She released her first Mini-LP, Bones and gained a different outlook on film when she was offered a job as crew on the set of The Deliverance, The Mayor Of Kingstown, and Comedy Roadshow, an Ethan Coen project.



NATHAN

Played by Martin Carlton

Cleveland born and raised, Martin Carlton spent 20 years in Hollywood honing his skills both in front of and behind the camera. After returning to Cleveland in 2010, he's worked on a number of projects in film and local theater. He plays the head crime boss, Howard Gaines, in "Bullets, Brothers and Blood" (PRIME, TUBI). Mostly known for "The First Annual Martin Carlton Stunt Special", a home video that went viral in LA before viral was a thing, seen on Real TV and Maximum Exposure, but some of his favorite Hollywood credits include Cole Hopper in "The Wild West Stunt Show" at Universal Studios Hollywood, and in the films Batman Returns, Doc Hollywood, Private Practice, Major Bryce in "The 10th Mountain", and Henry in "Enter The Grill Master". A lifelong musician and songwriter, look for The First Annual Martin Carlton Stunt Special Christmas Album in 2025.



MATTHEW VALENTINE

Played by Matt Rossman

Born and raised in the suburbs of Cleveland, Matt Rossman began his acting career at the age of 11 in his 5th grade school play. School plays led to short films, short films led to feature films.

Matt got his start in Clewood with the Keith Collins short film “Acquitted.” Matt notably helped write and direct the shorts “Oakwood” “Stare” and “Flesher” as part of Covered In Content.

Offset you can find Matt hanging out with his wife and daughter. He enjoys Cleveland sports, making tik toks with his daughter, and watching professional wrestling.



KIERAN “THE KATANA” MITCHELL

Played by Matt Kane



CREW CREDITS



CHAD KNAUER
PRODUCER

Chad Knauer is an Ohio-based filmmaker known for *Skeleton Cop*, *Skeleton Cop in Space*, *Evil Linda Presents Midnight Movie Massacre*, and the upcoming *Once Upon a Ninja*. And most importantly, he's a big giant teddy bear.



ZACH SHILDWACHTER
PRODUCER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Zach Shildwachter has been involved in filmmaking for 20+ years, serving in just about every aspect of preproduction, production and post from NYC to LA to Chicago to Ohio. He most enjoys directing, script writing, and producing. He has two dogs and is one rad dude.



MICK KUNZ
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael (Mick) Kunz is an American born filmmaker known for Rebirth (editor), "Saint Patrick's Day: The Sluagh Awakens" (Cinematography/editor), "Meat" (Cinematography/editor), and among others "Byte" (Cinematography/editor). He is a versatile artist who has shot and edited numerous music videos, documentary work, and video editing for online education. A graduate of Penn State, he is settled in Northeast Ohio where he focuses on filming independent movies

CREW CREDITS



SHANNON AHLSTRAND
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER/"AMELIA"

Shannon is a Cleveland based actor and popular Midwest headshot photographer. Since joining the acting community in 2020, she has held leading and supporting roles in numerous commercials for reginal and national brands, and independent films spanning comedy, horror, & drama.

In her dream job as a full-time actor headshot photographer, Shannon captures actors and acting teachers from across the nation, working tirelessly to help film and commercial actors learn the industry, make connections, get in front of agents, shine light on their successes and grow together in community.
She is feels humbled to be part of such personal and emotional film, and as a mother to a teen daughter herself, she was humbled at the challenge of bringing a relatability to her character's experience.



MATT BARNHART
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Matthew Barnhart has been involved in NE Ohio filmmaking for the past 7 years. He's worked on projects with Apple+, Hulu, Netflix, and Paramount. He brings a spirit and light hearted approach to his producing, writing, and acting. He's a practitioner of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and loves Dungeons & Dragons.



BEN GARTON
FIGHT CHOREOGHAPHER, STUNT COORDINATOR

Ben Garton is a Stunt Performer, Fight Choreographer, and Stunt Coordinator for "Gatling." With over 2 decades worth of Martial Arts experience, he is currently a 4th Dan Black Belt in Karate and a Blue Belt in Kickboxing at East Coast Martial Arts in Canton, Ohio, as well as a Blue Belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu at Paragon Martial Arts and Fitness in Tallmadge, Ohio. As a member of the Kane Action Team, he is known as Kick Master for his specialty in kicks, having self trained in Taekwondo, Capoeira, and Martial Arts Tricking. Besides Martial Arts, Ben enjoys practicing Calisthenics and spending time with his family.

CREW CREDITS



ZACK MEADOWS
MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Zack used to play bass in metal and punk bands, then got into hip hop and electronic production. He gets punched in the gut in *Gatling*.



MOSES RIVERA
PRODUCTION SOUND

Moses is a photographer, filmmaker, and sound engineer with a deep passion for storytelling in all its forms. He's spent over 20 years behind the camera capturing still moments, and in the past few years, he's fallen in love with video and audio production. Filmmaking allows him to bring stories to life visually, while his background in sound engineering helps him shape the emotion and depth that audio brings to a project. He loves the creative process—from concept to final cut—and he's always looking to grow, collaborate, and take on new projects that challenge him and fuels his passion.



CHAD CRITELLI
ART DIRECTOR

Chad Critelli, CSU alum, proudly graduated with dual degrees in Film & Media Arts and Journalism & PR! Achieving cum laude honors with a stellar 3.6 GPA, he's an award-winning filmmaker known for his exceptional production design. Chad brings positivity to the world of lower-budget media productions and is always ready to adapt to any role on set.


DOMINANCE.
DURATION.
DAMAGE.
KICK HIS ASS.

PRODUCTION NOTES

PRODUCTION NOTES

An ambitious film and with a budget tiner than an ants testes, *Gatling*, was a long, arduous, and challenging project beset with its fair share of hurdles. But ultimately this project became a very rewarding (and healing) experience for the entire cast & crew, especially writer, director, and producer Matt Kane.

What started out as a collection of images, sights, sounds, and scenes, following a tragic loss, eventually evolved into a script for a feature film. (To read more about this in greater detail, please see the 'Director's Statement' section in the EPK). Combine this with Kane's love of action films (a special affinity for 80's & 90's action) and his lifelong passionate love of martial arts, and you officially have the genesis of *Gatling*.





Kane started writing the script in the summer of 2023. He finished the first rough draft around October of that year. As writing started wrapping up and the story evolved, there was only one person that Kane could see playing in the lead role- Jerry Sur. Kane worked with Sur on a few projects and immediately saw his incredible potential. A great-looking guy that can act, be physical, fight and do stunts? Kane felt that Sur's potential was not being fully realized based on the roles he had in various other projects but he knew that with *Gatling* he would be able to show how talented he really is. A role he can really sink his hooks into and fully inhabit. He was the only man that could be "The Gatling".

The first person Kane decided to bring on for crew was independent film director Chad Knauer. Knauer's expertise in making ultra low-budget independent films and his promise to throw a few coins at *Gatling* made it a no-brainer that he would be the first person to bring on. The next person called was Zach Shildwachter whom Kane met on a previous film. Shildwachter impressed Kane with his command and on-set presence. With Kane doing acting on this film, it became important that he find someone whom he could trust and rely on to be his eyes and ears when he was in front of the camera. Shildwachter was definitely that guy.



PRODUCTION NOTES CONT'D

Kane, Knauer, & Shildwacther broke down the script and determined the budget. Part of the budget was to be self-funded via Knauer & Kane. It was decided that the rest of the budget was to be raised by crowdfunding. The official Gatling Indiegogo campaign was launched in February of 2024. The campaign was able to raise around $8,000. This, combined with the private equity and calling in many favors, created the official budget.

Mick Kunz' eye for visuals impressed Kane so much that he was the first and only person considered for the role of Director of Photography. Kunz and Kane had many discussions about martial arts as both men are practitioners. Kunz also happened to be a fan of MMA, so he knew exactly how he was going to make the fight scenes as visually expressive as possible. Kunz also impressed Kane with his work ethic and love for cinema.

After very impressive auditions, the rest of the cast was solidified. Chrissy Strong (Maya), Martin Carlton (Nathan), Shannon Ahlstrand (Amelia), and Matt Rossman (Valentine) all crushed their auditions. Each of the cast brought something special and a level of authenticity to each character. Although some say Rossman isn't really acting when he portrays Valentine. Who really knows?!

Principal photography began in late March of 2024. What's better than starting off the first day of filming than doing a 12 hour day? Since they only had the bar location for one day, they had to film all of those scenes in one day. It was a long day, but they got it done. Thankfully (and purposefully), that was the only day of filming that went past 10 hours.



A 6 week break commenced before filming picked up again in mid-May. One of the largest challenges independent films can face is scheduling. The majority of the cast & crew have other day jobs and film is their "fun" job. Consequently, the bulk of the filming had to be completed on weekends. Filming was done for 13 days from May through August. (17 days of filming in total.)



Another break was scheduled due to a few factors. Chief among them, the lead actor Jerry Sur, had a child. His son was born in August. Another reason a break was scheduled was to plan for the final sequence, which by far was going to be the most challenging.

The final sequence was set to be the final MMA fight in an "MMA Arena". Due to budgetary constraints, the original vision was pared down. It was decided that instead of an MMA arena one might see in the UFC, Gatling would have an underground, industrial, warehouse setting. This justified the scene being smaller in scale. One of the exciting creative challenges of film is what do you do when you don't get what you want? How do you pivot? What's intriguing is often that not getting what you want actually makes what you do go with more interesting.

PRODUCTION NOTES CONT'D

Once the location was secured, now an MMA cage was needed. Can't have an MMA fight without a cage. Well, this turned out to be the most difficult challenge. Do you know how hard it is to find an MMA cage you can have for 5 days? Since there were only dead ends in renting a cage, it was decided that a cage was to be purchased. A custom one was built by a company in China. This came with its own set of challenges…

One of the mottos that Kane has for filmmaking (and life in general) is "You don't have a problem. You need a plan." Well, buying anything from China can be an interesting endeavor to say the least. Especially when it's a steel cage weighing a ton coming halfway across the world. With every little "fee" the original price of the cage started to skyrocket. On top of that, paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. I suppose the shipping companies and customs wanted to make sure fentanyl wasn't being smuggled in the poles in the cage. Whatever. The final scene was originally scheduled for December. But, due to delays in the production the final scene was pushed back to the end of January (6 weeks later). Then, the cast, crew and extras had to be informed and make sure there were no scheduling conflicts. Thank the mighty gods that it was delayed because the cage didn't arrive until 2 DAYS BEFORE FILMING!





The final scene was set over the course of 5 days. One day for setup, three days for filming, and one day for tear down. 100+ cast, crew and extras made this scene possible. Five cameras were utilized for the final scene in order to cover all the action. Kunz did a great job leading the camera crew. Moses Rivera and Chad Critelli crushed it on sound. Zach Shildwachter helped run the set when Kane stepped in front of the camera. In addition to acting, producing, and directing, Kane also had to do fight scenes. To say he was completely drained is probably an understatement (he actually passed out a few days later from exhaustion). But, it was also one of the most rewarding experiences of his life. Filming actually wrapped on his and Critelli's birthday. To their surprise, a cake was brought out and the entire cast and crew regaled them with a "Happy Birthday" song. Kane was then presented with a director's chair (thanks Jerry) that was signed by the cast and crew. It even made Kane's eyes well up with tears (from the sawdust in the room, obviously not the tremendously thoughtful and emotionally moving gift).

A few quick notes and shoutouts. The fight choreography was expertly handled by Ben Garton, who is actually a student of Kane's. He did an exceptional job of crafting expressive but realistic fight sequences. Kane and Sur trained and prepped together for almost a year before filming the final scene. Most importantly, there were no serious injuries on the set. Kane suffered from some bruised ribs for a couple months after filming and Sur had some intense cramps from dehydration but nothing too severe.

Special shoutouts go to Critelli, Zack Meadows, and Matt Barnhart for being MVP's and working their asses off on set to do whatever needed to be done (including fixing a blown fuse on the second to last day of filming!) It really was a complete effort from everyone. People only see the finished product that makes it to the screen. They have no ideas about the battles that were fought, sacrifices that were made and the blood, sweat, and tears that were shed in order to make a film happen. So, when you watch *Gatling* or any other film, keep that in mind and tip your cap to those that despite all the odds, get their film made.





CAST & CREW SHOT ON THE FINAL DAY OF PRODUCTION


GLORY DOESN’T
CARE WHO
BLEEDS FOR IT.

FAQ’S

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What were the origins behind the story for *Gatling*?

This is covered in great detail in the "Director's Statement", but I'll give the quick version. A 10 year old student of mine tragically passed away. To navigate my grief I started writing. Emotions, imagery, scenes, whatever came to mind. I needed a vehicle to help me explore these emotions. I felt there was potential there for a screenplay. Combine this with my dream to make a martial arts action film and voila!

What elements of the script proved particularly challenging in bringing it to life on screen?

The most difficult was our climactic scene, the MMA arena scene. This was challenging for an assload of reasons. 1. We had to find a venue, 2. We needed a cage, 3. We needed a shit ton of extras, 4. We had to film a fight scene that would take up almost an entire act of the film. 5. We had to do all this on a shoestring budget! But, somehow, (I suppose through grit, determination, and stubbornness) we pulled it off.

How is Gatling distinct from other successful genre films?

I think what sets *Gatling* apart is that the story comes from a real, authentic place. It's coming from my heart and the deepest essence of my soul. What I put into this film is my soul made manifest. Also, the action in this film is meaningful, motivated and character-driven, something rare in action films.

Where was *Gatling* filmed?

It was shot on location in Northeast Ohio. We made it a point of emphasis to feature practical environments that added to the film's gritty realism. We aimed to use real locations and enhance the atmosphere and immerse the audience in the world of *Gatling*. We wanted the rust-belt midwest to be another character central to the film.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who stars in Gatling and how were they cast?

The cast features a mix of rising talent and seasoned performers who all brought intense authenticity to their roles. Jerry Sur as Gabe, Chrissy Strong as Maya, Martin Carlton as Nathan, Matt Rossman as Valentine, Shannon Ahlstrand as Amelia and of course the handsome Matt Kane as Kieran. Each actor was carefully selected for their emotional range and commitment to the character and the story as a whole. They had to embody the raw, flawed, and conflicted humanity at the core of each character. I was blessed to have not only such great performers, but even better people.

So, what's next for the filmmakers, cast & crew? Can we expect a sequel?

A sequel?? Hell naw!! Haha. Most sequels are the shits. If there was a genuinely unique and an emotionally-resonant story we could have these characters and this world inhabit, then possibly. I adore film, so I plan on making movies til I croak. But, what's next for me? A massage, I'm beat!

What kind of message or takeaway do you hope the audiences get from Gatling?

I hate questions like this! I'm here to paint the painting, it is up to the audience to interpret what is laid upon the canvas. I think the task of filmmakers is to provoke thought and ask questions. To force our audiences to engage with life's fundamental questions and issues in an intelligent, emotional, and empathetic way. Artists are not here to explain things. They are here to illuminate, suggest, juxtapose and let the audience draw their own conclusions. However, I do want audiences to appreciate the talent and effort that goes into making fight scenes. For them to have a better appreciation of the beauty and amazing athleticism that is required of the performers. Also, to understand how brutal the sport of MMA is and how difficult of a way of making a living it is for the fighters. And, that grief fucking sucks.

What has been the initial reaction so far from test and festival screenings?

We'll find out soon enough…


THERE’S ALL THIS
LOVE YOU WANT TO
GIVE BUT YOU CAN’T.
YOU HAVE ALL THIS
LOVE WITH NOWHERE
TO GO.

SCREENINGS

Tip: Customize this table. Right-click on any cell to see all the available table functions.

To merge, highlight two or more cells, then select **Merge Cells** to organize your table according to your needs.

Festival	*Theater*	Date

KEY FACTS

Production company

Kane Action Team
CNK Media

Production location

Northeast Ohio

Genre, subcategories

Drama, Action

Running time

1 hours, 45 minutes

Audio format

Digital Sound 1.5

Length

Text

Shooting format

4k, high resolution

Aspect ratio

16:9

Exhibition format

4k digital

Languages

English

Subtitles

English

Production year

2024

PRESS

PLACEHOLDER



“Gripping, heart-pounding”

Details about the press coverage go here

Pop Bridge Media



“Mysterious and thrilling”

Details about the press coverage go here

Coco Page Media



“Prepare for the intensity”

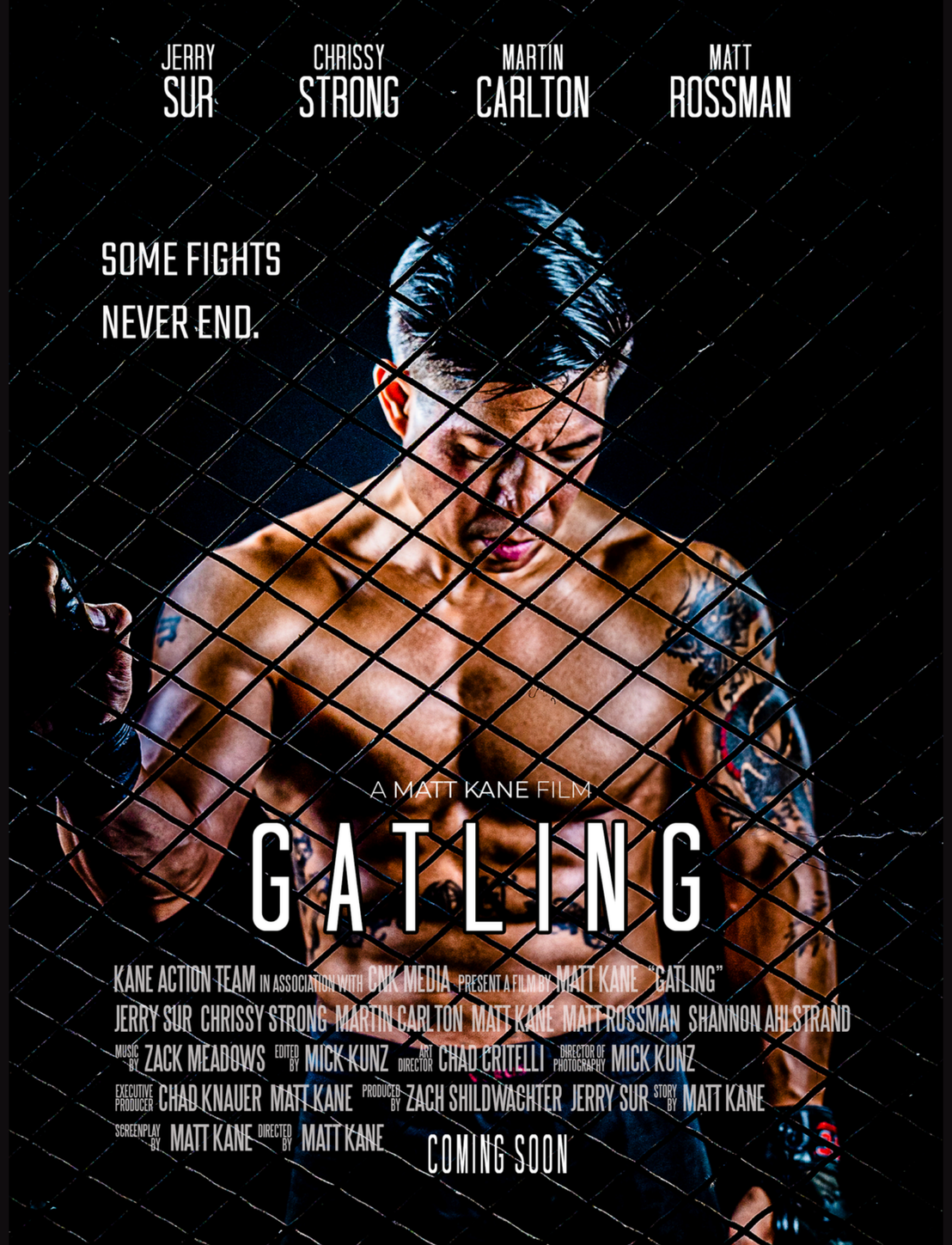
Details about the press coverage go here

Film Critics Group

GATLING

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KANE ACTION TEAM



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