

Peter O'Toole Leaves Christian Film Legacy Through Role as Prophet Samuel

Growing up behind a TV camera in Southern California and as a member of Christian television's first family, Matthew Crouch certainly had ample opportunity to rub shoulders with more than a few of Hollywood's big-screen legends. And as the producer of a handful of successful films in the faith-and-family genre, the Trinity Broadcasting Network vice president has worked up close and personal with many veteran actors over the years.

It's safe to say, however, that no star Crouch worked with in his nearly 40 years of TV and movie production burned any brighter than silver screen legend Peter O'Toole, who died Saturday at the age of 81.

Of course, the English film star's iconic status will forever be connected with his riveting portrayal of T.E. Lawrence in the 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia*, which garnered seven Academy Awards, including one for Best Picture. But for the son of TBN founders Paul and Jan Crouch, O'Toole will be most remembered for his portrayal of the prophet Samuel in his film *One Night With the King*, the dramatic retelling of the story of Esther (Hadassah) in the Old Testament. While coming in the twilight of O'Toole's stellar career, his appearance in *One Night With the King* was a special moment for Crouch, who recalled O'Toole shortly after his passing.

"Working with an actor of Peter O'Toole's stature would be special for any producer," Crouch says. "For those of us filming *One Night With the King*, it was a definite moment in time, and while we are deeply saddened by his passing, we will never forget the brief time we were honored to work with him."

Crouch notes that O'Toole's work in *One Night With the King* was made more special by the fact that it paired him with another big-screen legend, Omar Sharif, for the first time since the two appeared together in *Lawrence of Arabia* more than 40 years earlier.

"There is no one we could have imagined more perfect to play the role of the desert prophet Samuel in *One Night With the King* than Lawrence of Arabia himself," Crouch recalls. "And for Peter to be appearing for the first time in the same film with Omar Sharif since *Lawrence* only made it all the more memorable."

Stephan Blinn, a producer and screenwriter for *One Night With the King*, had his own special memories of working with O'Toole.

"Having tea on the palace steps in Rajasthan, India, with Peter O'Toole while shooting *One Night With the King* was one of the most treasured experiences of my life," Blinn remembers. "Whether speaking with producers or reminiscing with the local waitstaff whose names he remembered from working there 20 years before, Peter was the epitome of class and grace, and he made everyone feel as if they were as big and as irreplaceable a star as himself."

Although O'Toole was in his '70s at the time of filming, Blinn recalls that the screen legend "spun stories and told tales with a wit and a whimsy that will never be forgotten."

And O'Toole's onscreen work was remarkable to experience, Blinn adds.

"To watch him growl out the words of the prophet Samuel was to watch the Word of God come to life before our eyes," he says.

Based on the best-selling novel *Hadassah: One Night With the King*, by Tommy Tenney and Mark Andrew Olsen, the big-screen adaptation produced by Matthew Crouch chronicles the rise of

Hadassah/Esther from peasant to princess, her courageous role in the redemption of the Jewish people from certain destruction, and her winning of the love of the most powerful man in the kingdom.

In addition to Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif, *One Night With the King* stars a number of other renowned actors, including John Rhys-Davies (Lord of the Rings trilogy), Luke Goss (*Blade II*, *Zig Zag*), John Noble (*Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*), Tommy "Tiny" Lister (*Next Friday*), James Callis (*Bridget Jones' Diary*), Jonah Lotan (*The Jacket*) and Tiffany Dupont as Esther/Hadassah.

"*One Night With the King* is a story of divine destiny," Crouch says. "Hadassah was a poor, unknown peasant girl, an orphan, an outcast from a distant land, who went on to become queen of a powerful empire. Her poignant story proves that anyone, no matter their circumstances, can rise to greatness when guided by the hand of destiny."

TBN will air *One Night With the King* on Dec. 30 and Dec. 31. [Click here](#) for broadcast times.