

941 In The Backseat with...

Evan Meszaros and Alex Brook Lynn

Indie filmmakers utilize all available resources for movie, *Windcroft*.

Evan Meszaros spent a lot of time working on other people's movies. He's accumulated over ten-years' worth of on-set experience. That experience has helped him a lot in making his own movie, *Windcroft*. *Windcroft* is set in a rural area of Delaware County in northern Pennsylvania. The setting for the movie is an area that Meszaros spent a lot of time as a child, considering his parents' own the farm house that was used in the film.

"They bought this dilapidated house and had been working on it for the past ten-years," reveals Meszaros.

"Then two weeks after it was finished, we went in and filmed this [*Windcroft*] movie in another two weeks. I wrote the movie for the location. Hollywood studios would pay millions and millions of dollars for this location," the victory of the underdog, and maybe even a sense of relief in Meszaros' voice as he says, "and I got to use it for free. The movie to me was really special. I wanted to make a movie that blended genres. I wanted to do a drama, thriller and horror—all the genres that I really enjoy."

Windcroft was constrained by a small budget. "About ten years before I made this movie, I made a plan to get \$200,000 together with credit cards and I would just keep swapping balances back and forth. In theory, it's a good idea, but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. The budget for Alex Brook Lynn [the production designer] was min-



Movie poster picturing Vanessa Daniels.

iscule, but there were already lots of things to use," Meszaros says. "It's a working farm. We had an array of farm equipment, and Alex added things to scenes and brought things to another level," says Meszaros in the role of the proud father, "She's brilliant. I met her [while the two were working on a movie called *Swing City* together] and we became immediate friends. She has a creative aesthetic that really matches mine," he goes on to say, "She will be my friend for life."

"We were all very comfortable with each other," says Alex Brook Lynn. "It [the film] was very collaborative. Everybody there needed to have people they felt comfortable asking questions around them to work on the film."

Lynn reveals. "...and having that kind of freedom with the people around you will only benefit the end result. Because it had to be done so fast, there wasn't a huge amount of time and there wasn't a lot of room for double-checking," says Lynn. "We could skip the pleasantries and conversation." "That's part of the problem with directors...they don't know how to communicate what they want to the people who are actually working on the film every day," says Meszaros. "I learned every skill and by knowing each position, I could communicate my vision to other people. "I wanted this Romanticism of Americana and I also wanted to create this feeling of terror in the audience," says

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Meszaros.

“Initially you come to the farm house and it’s a newlywed wife’s dream—very picturesque and beautiful, but then you have old rusted farming tools in the barn—you know they can look nice in an antique shop when a nice old man is showing them to you,” says Alex Brook Lynn, “but wielded in the hands of a strong man. . . We just kind of had to hide the scary stuff in the shadows and then the light would recede; the ominous tools were eventually going to have to start creeping out of the shadows.”

If you were to find the list of film props, you might be a little disturbed. It would read something like ladybugs, meal worms, coyotes and . . . a dead deer.

“We ordered a thousand ladybugs and a thousand meal worms,” Alex says in a business-as-usual tone, “I wanted to use the ladybugs for the beginning, to make things pretty.” Lynn continues saying, “. . . then as the story goes on, it gets darker and the more disgusting kinds of insects are seen. . . but the ladybugs ended up escaping before we could actually use them,” she says with a sigh.

One of the scenes in the movie is shot with several coyotes. In order to use the coyotes, the film crew had to build a fence in the woods that measured ten-feet high, and covered a sixty-foot area. The coyotes were also on invisible leashes.

“There are no trained coyotes on the east coast,” Meszaros declares. “The scariest thing was the unpredictability of the animals.” Alex Brook Lynn picks up on the coyote story, saying, “It was a little nerve-racking, but it was kind of exciting too,” gushing on saying, “I’m thinking: I could get my face chewed off at any second!”

“There’s an inherent good quality any director should have—and not everyone does—and that’s an ability to get your workers to trust you,” Meszaros says. “Monica

“The scariest thing was the unpredictability of the animals.”



Monica Knight bloodied and menacing as Mindy.

[Knight, who plays Mindy in *Windcroft*], she had some crazy scenes. We had her tied up with barbed wire with the coyotes all around her,” Meszaros’ concern rippling through his voice. “Everyone was scared, but I pretended that I wasn’t. I would never put my talent in any danger.”

Although Meszaros made a show of courage with the coyotes to get the cast and crew comfortable, there was a real danger with the animals.

“Nick walks up to me before we film the coyote scene and slaps a bottle of Mace into my palm and I just stare at him,” Meszaros recounts. “He looks back at me and says, ‘We’re not insured for this,’ and then he walks away. We wanted to train them as much as possible. . . but the craziest stuff would set them off—like the color

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yellow. So before we did any filming, I had to buy the cast and crew T-shirts that we all wore for a month without bathing, just so our scents were on the shirts," Meszaros says, a shudder from the memory in his voice. "Then we had to put the shirts in with the coyotes so they wouldn't go crazy while we were working."

The final and more problematic item of the prop list was the deer carcass. "We had a plan. We originally contracted a taxidermist," Alex Brook Lynn says. "And this guy...his entire house was filled with animals. Then as the day that we were going to need it [the deer] is approaching, he's like, 'Look, there just hasn't been any kills.'" "So Jen and Illya [members of the film crew] go out on the road and look for a fresh kill," Lynn says matter-of-factly. "Luckily they found one and they picked it up and threw it in the car." The next round of information is not intended for those weak of stomach, so be warned. "Illya and Matt had to break all its limbs to fit it in this tiny little freezer," Lynn says as if the story is nothing out of the ordinary. "Then we wait for it to freeze and wait for coyote day. So here's this rotting deer corpse, tied with rope and we tried to hoist it up a tree," Lynn says, "then six hours into the shoot it began to stink."

"I mean, I didn't like smelling it, but it was great for the movie," says Meszaros, "all I know is this dead deer is here and it smells rancid. That's independent film, though," he says with a laugh. "If we were a big Hollywood studio, we would have had a prosthetic deer, but for our purposes, we just couldn't afford it."

The final question of Meszaros' interview was a general question about anything more that he might want to offer—anything about the process of making the film that the audience should



Severed coyote leg. Unknown origin.

know. The tone of Meszaros' voice took on that of Anthony Michael Hall in *Sixteen Candles* as he's explaining his need for panty proof to Molly Ringwald's character. "You know, I'm the worst person at self-promotion. I should have a script ready for that exact question, but I don't," Meszaros goes on to say, "I just want to tell stories and make movies." Something else to keep in mind is that despite the budget, Meszaros' movie

has earned a number of awards including best cinematography, best picture, best director, best actress, just to name a few. For more specific information on where to find the movie and more comprehensive information of cast and crew, please check out:

www.windcroftmovie.com

www.myspace.com/windcroft



Cast and crew hard at work.



Ray Wasik as murdered Murray.