

Area filmmakers strike gold indie horror film

Written by Alaina L. Lewis



For Twin Cities made feature film "After the Dawn," a happy accident quickly transitioned into something greater than either director Mitchel A. Jones, and actress Nicole Kruex ever expected.

Sure, their plan was always to shoot a feature film they would share with their supporters and family upon completion, but their motivation was mostly to be able to say to themselves, "We did this, so now we can do anything." However, "After the Dawn," which was filmed on a budget of around \$12,000 while utilizing the lush Minnesota scenery as the storyline's backdrop, went from being a small, sporadically worked on project, to a major horror film success that can now proudly stand alongside some of the horror market's greatest offerings due to landing itself a distribution deal that thrust their film onto retail shelves in places such as Blockbuster, Best Buy, Netflix and Amazon.



"After the Dawn" is a story about a woman named Cassie Becker, who finds herself alive in a post-apocalyptic world brought about after a chemical fallout, and the journey she undertakes seeking other survivors and the hope for a new beginning. All this while she must attempt to stay alive in a world where the only faces she sees are those of the other chemically affected survivors who read like the woes of this life's battered womb.

"As budding filmmakers, Mitchel A. Jones and I felt it was necessary to break out of the idea of shooting a film and actually commit to just shooting one," said Kruex. "It would have taken us

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twice as long to shop a script around Hollywood. We would've had to wait for a studio to respond and it would've taken forever to see our product on the shelf. Jones and I don't believe in waiting for others to commit to our destiny, so we created one for ourselves and so far the result has proven promising."



What happened with "After the Dawn" and its unanimously favorable reception can be likened to how sleepers like "Slumdog Millionaire," "The Hangover," or even "Star Wars" dropped onto the film market in their era and came out on the other side with unexpected resounding praise for their execution and resonances with its audiences. "After the Dawn" has been turning heads and hearts ever since the horror community became privy to this tiny little masterpiece that features exceptional supporting cast members including Shane McCaffrey, Aaron Courteau, Tommy Propson and Kelly Barry-Miller.

Putting it plainly, "After the Dawn" signifies what happens when intelligent minds get their hands on a camera and have no fear of where the story will take them.

"Production is in fact, a series of problems needing to be solved," said Kruex. "We've never before experienced what it was like to turn around a full feature. Both Jones and I have created short films and commercial works, but to take on a feature is nothing short of crazy. However, what our practice runs had provided us with were the tools to get projects done quickly, with quality, and on reasonable budgets that when viewed tend to look much higher in quality than expected."

Kruex shared her thoughts on what she learned through their journey with "After the Dawn."

"We learned what it really takes to make a movie and what steps we need to consider as we find ourselves at the next level of filmmaking," said Kruex. "One of those things (is) how to build a marketable product as well as an artistic one. That, in all honesty, is really what filmmaking is about in the business world. It's about how to make art that is also profitable."

Currently the duo of Jones and Kruex, are working on their second feature film entitled "Jobe" based on the biblical story, which will be a blend of the Christian and horror film genres. "Jobe"

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is a collaboration between Jones' and Kruex's Triwar Pictures and Chasing Autumn production companies and African film producer Reggie Anderson's company, End Time Harvest Entertainment. The film is already attracting interest in Hollywood on both the financing and talent front, and might see its lead character be portrayed by one of professional wrestling's current hotshot fighters. The producers are concealing the name until they have inked a deal with the actor, but rest assured "Jobe" is going to pack some serious star power.

Apart from seeking more investors alongside the few they have already acquired Kruex, Jones, and Anderson will also be seeking out production funds through a crowd funding campaign with the company Indiegogo as well as other in-kind donations. The campaign is expected to launch early next month.

"Jones and I have sparked the interest of people very capable of increasing our efforts in a business sense (with) things like working with named talent, distribution houses and larger productions," said Kruex. "Our next project is on the slate to be shot before the end of the year. We are working to attach some incredible names and already have partial funding."

The local filmmaker said "Jobe" is a classic story with a series of twists.