Interviews: Jamie Anne Allman, Director Joe Maggio on 'The Last Rites of Joe May'

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on December 6, 2011 - 4:53pm

- Bitter Feast [2]
- Chicago [3]
- Dennis Farina [4]
- Gary Cole [5]
- HollywoodChicago.com Content [6]
- Interview [7]
- Jamie Anne Allman [8]
- Joe Arce [9]
- Joe Maggio [10]
- Milk and Honey [11]
- Patrick McDonald [12]
- The Last Rites of Joe May [13]
- The Notebook [14]

CHICAGO – One of the nice surprises of the Chicago International Film Festival was the opening night presence of a true Chicago-based film. "The Last Rites of Joe May" stars Dennis Farina as an aging small-time hood, taken in by single mother Jenny Rapp, portrayed by Jamie Anne Allman. The production was directed with sublime power by Joe Maggio.

Allman and Maggio were at the festival, circulating opening night and sitting down for interviews the next day. The film uses the city of Chicago as a character, but you won't see Wrigley Field or the skyline. What you will see is the bitter winter on streets where people like Joe May live and survive.

HollywoodChicago.com got to talk with both Allman and Maggio, and got their keen insight into this excellent Chicago-based film.

Jamie Anne Allman, Jenny Rapp in "The Last Rites of Joe May"

Ms. Allman was born Jamie Anne Brown, and is from the heartland. Born in Parsons, Kansas, she moved later to Los Angeles to pursue her childhood dream of a acting career. After getting notable roles in "Six Feet Under" and "The Practice," she played the troubled Connie Riesler for two seasons on "The Shield." Her big movie break came with "The Notebook" (2004) portraying Martha Shaw. Her husband since 2006 is Marshall Allman, who portrays Tommy Mickens on "True Blood.'

Jamie Anne Allman at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 6th, 2011
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: What do you think the key was to the relationship of Joe May and Jenny Rapp? Do you think Jenny was allowing for Joe to take some of her responsibility away?

Jamie Anne Allman: No. I feel like Jenny Rapp didn’t have a proper relationship, and a child needs a father figure. She also didn’t have comfort with what she was going through, and didn’t have a man to help her. With Joe May at first, it was to survive, and then it grew into something more as time went on. He was just a man in her life.

HollywoodChicago.com: Jenny Rapp is a victim of domestic abuse. What character trait did you feel you most had to connect with to find that type of victim, and how difficult was it to access that trait?

Allman: Because I was actively being abused in the film, I was very not trusting of him [Stanley, her abusing boyfriend], but looked at him as a man in her life. Just being unsure and not trusting, I think that came out.

HollywoodChicago.com: Was the character difficult to access? Did you fall into her or wrestle the part a bit?

Allman: I feel like it was in the good writing, Joe Maggio wrote a fantastic script. If I read something, and it doesn’t move me, sometimes I still have to do it, especially if it’s a good opportunity. But it’s so much easier when I am moved, because it will come out in my performance, and the audience will be moved. This is a real story, there are women out there that suffer this abuse. So just to step into their shoes for a second, which is nothing compared to real life, didn’t make it a struggle.

Dennis Farina, Meredith Droeger and Jamie Anne Allman in 'The Last Rites of Joe May'
Photo credit: Tribeca Films

HollywoodChicago.com: We talked a bit before about the de-glamorizing you did to access part of Jenny. Jenny speaks briefly about a past that she is a bit embarrassed by, did you and/or the director create a comprehensive back story for her and what did you apply from the back story to her character?

Allman: We did. Before I had met with Joe Maggio, I had made up something for myself, and when I discussed it with Joe, I asked him if he had something specific, and he did. We filled that all out, to make things clear and what I needed to understand. The character wasn't thinking about looks, she's a single mom trying to make it in life and survive.

HollywoodChicago.com: As a Midwest person yourself, what is different about Chicago in its Midwest character, and what do you enjoy most about the city when you visit or work here?

Allman: Well, I'm from the country. The accent is different here. [laughs] I love it here. I love Millennium Park and the way the city is set up.

HollywoodChicago.com: Which role, out of all the early smaller parts, television and film, did you feel broke you out to the next level in the business?

Allman: The Shield as Connie Riesler. I did two seasons of that show and it go to show off a side of me that I hadn't had the opportunity to do yet. She was tough yet sympathetic, and people fell in love with her.

HollywoodChicago.com: You come from Kansas, and a big family. What kind of encouragement did you get from that family in your pursuit of acting, and what did your Parsons, Kansas, experience teach you that you still feel is part of your overall personality?

Allman: The thing that I hold onto, that I learned from my Kansas days, is if you love something, just keep doing it. And if do something because you love it, eventually someone will pay you for it.

HollywoodChicago.com: How is Jamie Anne Allman different from your former actor name as Jamie Anne Brown. Do you have a higher profile as Allman?

Allman: Not necessarily. When I was Jamie Anne Brown, everyone would say, 'what's up, Jame-Brown?!?' And now that I have Jamie Allman, no one says, 'what's up, Jame-Allman?!?' It's because it's too many syllables. So I thought it was because I was cool and then found out it was just the syllable nature of the name. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: If you were a friend of Jenny Rapp's, and could give her some advice to make her life better, what would that advice be?

Allman: I'm trying not to get into co-dependency anymore, so I don't want to give any advice. [laughs] Then I'd be on the phone with them every day, I'd be stuck with them. Their life would become more important than mine. [laughs]

Joe Maggio, Director of "The Last Rites of Joe May"

Joe Maggio had written and directed four feature films before "The Last Rites of Joe May," but the current film turned out to be the big one. Backed by Tribeca Films, and opening the Chicago International Film Festival, this small film shot in the Windy City has made a big impact.

Joe Maggio at the Chicago International Film Festival, October 6th, 2011
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: You used the city of Chicago as a character in your film, and you chose to set it in harsh winter. What element of this great city did you best want to communicate in Joe May, and how does the city parallel your character?

Joe Maggio: I think what we were trying to do was portray the city like a jungle, a dangerous place. We were always careful when Joe was walking down the street that we contrasted him with people who looked like they didn’t have a care in the world. Joe May is like the cartoon, with a cloud over his head. Because for a guy like Joe, the city is a dangerous place – it’s cold, it contains people who are dangerous and the difference between life and death is a few bad breaks away. That’s where Joe is.

As an outsider, I had to immerse myself in Chicago. I think Chicago is so cinematic, even the alleys where people put their garbage. You never see that in other movies. I wanted that old neighborhood field

HollywoodChicago.com: The title is ‘The Last Rites of Joe May,’ an evocative Catholic sacrament image. What is most Catholic about Joe May?

Maggio: Well, I’m Catholic. One thing I take away from that upbringing, no matter the ethnicity, is guilt and redemption. No matter what, you can redeem yourself. That is something that Joe embodies. He’s been knocked back so many times, how does he keep going? He doesn’t give up because he believes that he will be redeemed in some way.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the genesis of the Joe May character. Was it an observation you made or did you read into something that suddenly gave you the idea?

Maggio: At the time I was first thinking of the character, I was watching a lot of Italian neo-realist films, in particular Vittorio De Sica's 'Umberto D.' If you're familiar with the film, the story lines of Joe May and that film are very similar. In post-war Rome, the struggle to survive was day-to-day, more life and death. That is the world of Umberto D. I was living in Brooklyn at the time, and I was seeing guys like Joe May at the local bars as the neighborhoods were gentrifying. They were being driven out. My grandfather also had some similarities, he was a short money guy, a real dandy and named Joe.

HollywoodChicago.com: You deal in part with domestic abuse in your film. In your research into that psychology, what telling characteristic did you directly put into the character of Jenny Rapp?

Maggio: I have to give credit to my wife, who in the first 15 years of our relationship, was a social worker and aided battered women. When she read the script, and what she brought to it, was the fact that the guys these women are with are both physically and psychologically abusive, so extreme. Yet the women make excuses for them, and the psychology is very deep. To pull apart that knot and try to figure out what is going on, forget it. They make excuses, and that is what Jenny did. She's tough, she's smart, but she is still making the excuses.

Dennis Farina in 'The Last Rites of Joe May'
Photo credit: Tribeca Films

HollywoodChicago.com: What type of actor's director are you? In your collaboration with your ensemble in this film, what began to feel like the best technique for getting the performances you wanted?

Maggio: This was an unusual film for me. In the past, I had always had the luxury of having the actors available to me months prior to the shoot. There would be round tables and workshops discussing the scenes, and working it out beforehand. There was none of that in Joe May. Basically I met Gary Cole, and I said 'action.' The difference was these people are used to doing the work on their own, and Gary showed up and was very precise and spontaneous. Working with all the actors, it seemed so inexact, but I when was dialing in little adjustments they would just nail it. So while it was different, it worked because they are who they are.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the first day on the set like, given a more big-time actor and setting feel?

Maggio: The first day I showed up to the set, I almost ran away. I saw all the trucks, and I wanted to run away. But I went for a walk, got my coffee and for the first couple of days was pretending to be in control. I just wanted to go home. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: You began your career doing micro-budget films. What tricks did you teach yourself in shooting those types of movies that you bring to a bigger film like Joe May?

Maggio: Speed and efficiency. On the micro-budget sets, I would only have 10 days to shoot, and I'd do much of it myself. I had 27 days for Joe May, and the crew was bigger and more cumbersome to move. It took that production team a little time to get used to me saying, 'okay, we got it, let's move.' You've got to keep moving and not waste time.

HollywoodChicago.com: After working with him, what do you know about Dennis Farina that the rest of the world doesn't know?

Maggio: Dennis Farina, in his personal life, does not swear. He's an old school perfect gentleman.

"The Last Rites of Joe May" has a limited release around the country. Check local listings for show times and theaters. The film is also available through Video on Demand. Check television providers for availability. Featuring Dennis Farina, Gary Cole, Jamie Anne Allman, Meredith Droeger, Ian Barford and Chelcie Ross. Written and directed by Joe Maggio. Not Rated. For the HollywoodChicago.com interviews of Dennis Farina and Gary Cole of "The Last Rites of Joe May," click here. *[15]*

[16]

By PATRICK McDONALD [17]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

© 2010 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 19 2024 - 9:46am*):
http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/16660/interviews-jamie-anne-allman-director-joe-maggio-on-the-last-rites-of-joe-may

Links:
[1] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq
[2] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/bitter-feast
[3] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/chicago
[4] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dennis-farina
[5] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/gary-cole
[6] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content
[7] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html
[8] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jamie-anne-allman
[9] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/joe-arce
[10] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/joe-maggio
[11] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/milk-and-honey
[12] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald
[13] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-last-rites-of-joe-may
[14] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-notebook
[15] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/16623/interviews-dennis-farina-gary-cole-perform-the-last-rites-of-joe-may
[16] mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com
[17] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT