

## Interview: Screenwriter David Wilson Represents ‘Spirit Riders’ at Equus Film Festival

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CHICAGO – The first big breakthrough for any screenwriter is a momentous occasion, and David Wilson has done just that. The shot-on-a-shoestring indie family film “Spirit Riders” – written by Wilson – has had a great afterlife in limited release, Video-On-Demand, DVD, foreign distribution and online digital downloads. And this upcoming weekend, from November 20 to 22, 2015, Wilson will represent his story, about Equine Therapy, at the Equus Film Festival in New York City.

David Wilson hails from East Texas, and got his start in advertising and film media in Chicago. As most aspiring writers experience, there were a lot of stops and starts before his first screenplay, “The Underneath,” was filmed by a production company headed by director Brian T. Jaynes. This led to two more assignments from the same source, one for “Spirit Riders” and the upcoming “The Shadow People.”



Screenwriter David Wilson and Lead Actress Alexandra DeBerry on the Set of ‘Spirit Riders’

*Photo credit: Global 3 Media*

The Equus Film Festival focuses on film and video regarding horses, with participants at the riding, stabling and filmmaker level. “Spirit Riders” fits their screening agenda perfectly, as the story focuses on a troubled teenage girl named Kacie (Alexandra DeBerry) who is caught stealing pharmaceutical drugs. In lieu of jail time, a judge sentences her to an Equine Therapy camp, which uses the care of horses to aid people with disabilities, mental challenges, and situations like Kacie’s court ordered penance. While in residence at the camp, Kacie meets a “horse whisperer” named Rex (Lance Henriksen) and begins to heal in ways she didn’t expect.

David Wilson talked to HollywoodChicago.com via phone, about his journey to the “Spirit Riders,” and his work as a now-veteran screenwriter.



**HollywoodChicago.com:** You will be appearing this weekend at the Equus Film Festival on behalf of the film ‘Spirit Riders.’ What elements of the film made it appealing to this festival?

**David Wilson:** The film is about a teenage girl who befriends a horse at an Equine Therapy camp, and the Equus Film Festival deals specifically with horse movies, so it was a natural fit. There are documentaries, short films and features all about horses, and in our film the horse is a positive protagonist at the camp.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What got you the assignment for ‘Spirit Riders,’ what angle did you want to approach the story, and what was key to formulating that angle?

**Wilson:** The producers had the general idea, with the teenage girl needing the Equine Therapy directly to heal past traumas. In the past, I’d done work with an Equine Therapy ranch that dealt with war veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. So I took what I had learned from that experience and used it to inform the story.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What did you have to learn personally about Equine Therapy and horses in general, to give the story a basis in reality?

**Wilson:** I was amazed with how much I learned doing the additional research. Horses act as a mirror emotionally to humans, for example if you’re upset around them, they will be upset. In training or being around them, you have to learn to control your own emotions. You have to be calm to calm a horse. In being true to your own emotions, the use of Equine Therapy can be a great healing source.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is your second produced screenplay, and your third – ‘Shadow People’ – is in post production. What has changed the most in your approach to screenwriting from your first script to your third?

**Wilson:** It was really about seeing how other people interpret what I write down. From the actors to the production crew, it’s such a collaborative art, and it really affects how I approach the dialogue and descriptions. In a sense, I needed to be clear about some points in the script, and more vague in others – to give the actors and director more room to do what they do. It was liberating, because in those vague parts the actors and production will run with it, and then it becomes clearer where I need to be more exact.



The Cast of ‘Spirit Riders’ Go Over the Script, Written by David Wilson

*Photo credit: Global 3 Media*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You got into screenwriting as a sort of second career. At what point in your media career did you think that screenwriting was the way to go, and how did you go about finding a production team for your first script, and subsequent collaborations?

**Wilson:** It started a long time ago, easily 20 years, that I began to dabble in screenwriting. It was something basically that I’ve always been interested in, but it sat on the side for awhile, even as I’ve had a lifelong interest in film and communications. I stuck with it, wrote and tried to sell, and got close a couple times.

With the current production team I’m working with, the director and I had actually gone to high school together way back when, and had lost touch until I noted he went to Los Angeles to pursue filmmaking. He moved back to Texas, and we connected again. It was about five years until a finished product came out of that connection, which became ‘The Underneath.’

**HollywoodChicago.com:** All three of your screenplays have been directed by Brian T. Jaynes. How has your relationship with him



developed, and how do you think they help the films?

**Wilson:** We have a good working relationship now, and he generally calls me when he has a good idea for a film. ‘Spirit Riders,’ for example, came about when I was on vacation with my kids in Cape Cod. He called me with the idea that the producer of the film [Nicole Walton-Durban] loosely had gone through when she was younger.

While on vacation, I sat outside for an hour and a half long conference call, and we brainstormed the general treatment. The next day, I spent the day at the beach with a notepad, and sketched it out, then turned it back around to them. That’s basically how it came together. The other two scripts had a longer back-and-forth period.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What three films or screenplays can give everyone an idea of the ideal direction you’d like to go in as far as what you want to create for the movies?

**Wilson:** I would say ‘Pulp Fiction,’ for it’s non-linear structure and distinctive voice, ‘Raising Arizona’ because of its hysterical entertainment value, and ‘The Usual Suspects,’ because I love that type of mystery, one that begs for a second viewing. I want to do something as entertaining and funny as those examples, and nuance it through my perspective.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In the midst of an entire story, often people miss a line or just absorb it just as part of the whole film. Of the three screenplays you’ve produced, what has been the favorite line you’ve written and in what scene, plus how does it define your point of view as a screenwriter?

**Wilson:** In ‘Spirit Riders,’ there is a line that the character of Lance Hendriksen says to the girl, ‘The only moment you have right now, is the only moment you’re going to get.’ That’s my philosophy of life, as it were, and it fuels everything. There are no second chances.

*Screenwriter David Wilson will appear on behalf of “Spirit Riders” at the Equus Film Festival in New York City, running from November 20th through the 22nd, 2015. For information and schedules, [click here](#). [20] “Spirit Riders” is available on DVD and through digital download at Amazon Prime and iTunes, among other outlets. See specific sites for download options. Featuring Alexandra DeBerry, Lance Hendriksen, C. Thomas Howell, Olivia Osteen and Kim Jackson Wheeler. Written by David Wilson. Directed by Brian T. Jaynes. Not Rated.*



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