

Interview, Audio: David Lowery, Writer & Director of 'A Ghost Story'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 13, 2017 - 12:18pm

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CHICAGO – Not all supernatural tales are meant to scare, and writer/director David Lowery haunts in a different way with his new film, “A Ghost Story.” Using the classic “white sheet” costume, with actor Casey Affleck underneath it for most of the film, Lowery creates a spirit with both emotion and a contemplation of its fate.



The Ghost (Casey Affleck) and Its World in 'A Ghost Story'

Photo credit: A24

“A Ghost Story” involves a young married couple, M (Rooney Mara) and C (Casey Affleck) as they move into small, remote house. There are some “bumps in the night” within the dwelling, but generally they’re in love with their castle. Tragedy strikes when C is in a car accident, and dies. At the morgue, he paranormally sits upright, and envelopes the sheet around him, taking on the persona of the classic ghost outfit. He goes back to “haunt” the house he formally lived in, and sees the progression of his widowed wife and the residents that subsequently live there. All is laid out and experienced for the Ghost as time progresses, except for one mystery... which could be its destiny.

Writer/Director David Lowery is a multi-tasking man in his film career. Besides having made five feature films – including last year’s acclaimed remake of “Pete’s Dragon” for Walt Disney Studios – Lowery is an editor, writer, producer, cinematographer, actor and soundtrack contributor. He broke out in 2013 with the Sundance Film Festival favorite “Ain’t Them Bodies Saints” (also featuring Casey Affleck and Rooney Mara), and got the writing and directing assignment for “Pete’s Dragon” three years later. He is currently in post-production after directing Robert Redford in “Old Man and the Gun,” slated for release next year. He spoke to HollywoodChicago.com about his philosophy behind “A Ghost Story,” in an interview split between transcript and audio.

HollywoodChicago.com: You contemplate a purgatory state through the lens of time with 'A Ghost Story.' How did you want to use that concept and relativity of time to formulate the evolution for your title character?

David Lowery: I love how time can transform things. I spend a lot of time thinking about that – probably too much time – but it is one of the defining elements of our lives. It is also one of the key tenets of life that we have no control over. I like using the fact that we can't control time as a narrative element. All of my films have been about time to a certain extent, but this was the first one where I dug in and made a film where time is the defining character of the movie. Time is an inevitability in our lives, and is inescapable, and I wanted in this story to feel like time was weighing it down.

HollywoodChicago.com: The spirit in the film lives among some random experiences in C's post-death journey. In your thought process in creating the story, are these spirits – including the other one you depict – on a pre-destined path to their endgame, and is the unfolding of their journey exactly what they need to learn in order to get to that end?



David Lowery in Chicago

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Lowery: The 'spirits' do need to learn something, particularly our key character. There is a journey that they need to take in order to get where they need to go. But there is also a lack of pre-destination. There are decisions to be made, as we see in the beginning of the film as C's ghost has the opportunity to go through a doorway, that could lead to some other place, but he chooses not to go. So there is choice, and his fate to live in the house and to haunt it is essentially of his own making.

HollywoodChicago.com: Do you believe, as we are sitting here, in an afterlife? Not so much about a deity but how our consciousness moves on in the transition after death?

Lowery: I'm comforted by the possibility. [laughs] I don't believe that it does, but I'm open to it. I have zero faith about it, but a great amount of hope.

HollywoodChicago.com: What images of the classic sheeted ghost was flowing through your mind as the story crystalized? What feeling about that basic look kept coming back to you?

Lowery: It made me laugh. Laughter is an amazing gateway to every other emotion. Once I laughed at the image, I recognized its inherent sadness and naivete, and the potential to project emotion onto it... because of the simplicity of the image. And that was enough to make a movie regarding it.

HollywoodChicago.com: The description of creating the actual ghost costume that Casey wears reminded me of the Bruce the Shark stories when Steven Spielberg filmed 'Jaws'. What was your eureka moment on set in creating the Ghost in how you envisioned it, and did it have to do with the difficulties of the costume, as was the mechanical shark in 'Jaws'?

Lowery: [Laughs] The 'eureka moment' in the film was the realization that all Casey had to do was stand completely still. We'd spent a fair amount of time dealing with the mechanics of having him walk in and out of rooms, moving around and letting his body language come through beneath the sheet. But it always felt wrong, it felt like a person wearing a costume. So when we finally realized to make this practical ghost an actual ghost, it was just to make him stand still. At that point, a weight was lifted off all of our shoulders, we didn't have to have any movement. He just needed to be there.

In the audio portion of the interview, David Lowery relates more stories of "A Ghost Story" – and talks with Patrick about the recovering Catholic Church nature of it all – in addition to working with Casey Affleck and Rooney Mara for a second time, and how his ghost would fare if it "met" a certain movie comedy team.

"A Ghost Story" continues its nationwide release in Chicago on July 14th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Casey Affleck, Rooney Mara, Keisha and Will Oldham. Written and directed by David Lowery. Rated "R"



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