

Film News: Midwest Independent Film Festival to Present 'Animals' on June 3, 2014

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CHICAGO – One of the best local independent films recently shot in Chicago is the story of two lost souls entitled “Animals.” The Midwest Independent Film Festival will present the film on their usual “first Tuesday” program on June 3rd, 2014, at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema in Chicago.

“Animals” is directed by Collin Schiffli, and was written by David Dastmalchian – who also portrays lead character Jude – based on his own experiences. The film co-stars Kim Shaw as Bobbie, Jude’s lover and co-dependent drug addict. The achingly raw journey of the couple is a stark and harrowing look at addiction. Director Schiffli also uses the City of Chicago as a character in the film, going to the back alleys and seamier underside of the urban landscape.



Collin Schiffli (left) and David Dastmalchian on the set of 'Animals'

Photo credit: Schiffli Films

Collin Schiffli and David Dastmalchian were at the Chicago Critics Film Festival last month, and they talked about their challenging and autobiographical film.

HollywoodChicago.com: David, what inspired the film for you, and then how did you go about gathering the team for it?

David Dastmalchian: They say to write what you know, and I had my own journey and personal battle with addiction. That is something I understand, and I wanted to find a way to write a narrative and cinematic form about it. This is my first screenplay, and I began it in 2006. By the time we shot it, I was in the 70th draft. It was all based on ideas and experiences I took from my own life.

Gathering the team was like a snowball effect. One filmmaker who I really respect read the script and loved it, and told me he would help get it made. With that encouragement, I started to assemble the people for the production, and the first person was our director Collin Schiffli, who I’ve known for years. He was the most talented visionary I could give my screenplay to, and he was also somebody I could trust, as a friend.

HollywoodChicago.com: Collin, what did you most want to communicate in David's script, to give the film its atmosphere?

Collin Schiffli: I wanted to make sure it was more than a film about drug addiction – even as I desired to be true and honest about that situation – I also wanted to emphasize that it was also a relationship story.

HollywoodChicago.com: David, since this is personal and autobiographical, what elements of Jude are closest to who you are?

Dastmalchian: For good and for bad, the things Jude gets very excited about things he has passion for, and that's me as well. Collin has described it like 'a kid on Christmas Eve.' That energy is very similar to me in that character. But between Jude and Bobbie, I wrote myself more into Bobbie's character, the female half of the story. There is a lot of her that I find myself connected to, especially in the final act.

HollywoodChicago.com: Collin, if the city of Chicago is a character, how would you describe that character, and what did you add to that character in the film?

Schiffli: On the surface, Chicago is this amazingly majestic city, but like every urban center there is also a gritty, raw feel to it. That's how I approached the main characters, at one point on the surface they were a vital couple, but what happened to them underneath the surface becomes their circumstance. There are so many sides to Chicago, I wanted to explore them all. I just wanted to come here and be a part of it.

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally Collin, which directors are your influences, and do you ever include a tribute to them within your films?

Schiffli: Definitely. It sounds like a cliché, but Martin Scorsese is a huge influence. I wanted this film to be my 'Mean Streets,' in a way. I wanted it to have the form of those classic, gritty 1970s movies.

The Midwest Independent Film Festival presents "Animals," Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014, at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2848 N. Clark in Chicago, beginning at 6pm. For more information and to purchase tickets [click here](#). [14]



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