

Killer Makeover

Lipstick! Eye shadow! ACTION!



An in-depth interview with the film's creators.

I'm Lindsay Denniberg, director of the experimental horror comedy *Video Diary of a Lost Girl*. My new fun horror film *Killer Makeover* is coming out next year! So lets plug it, shall we?

Killer Makeover is about a beauty school drop out that gets cursed by a witch, so that anyone she puts makeup on...DIES! Our heroine starts working as a mortician to make ends meet, but finds out something sinister is going on at the funeral home...

Set in the same cinematic neon universe as Video Diary of Lost Girl, Killer Makeover is a supernatural romantic comedy about following your dreams, even when they become nightmares!

How did *Killer Makeover* come to be you ask? Well, it's a long story.

So I thought, what better way to dive right into the deep end, then to talk to two of the screen writers: Sarah Fensom and Chris Shields! Not only are they the writers, they also perform as the leads: Karen Caragiullo (Sarah Fensom) and Tony Sinclair (Chris Shields)!



Karen (Sarah Fensom) and Tony (Chris Shields) on a date in Killer Makeover.

Sarah and Chris are both film and art critics for some amazing publications: *Screen Slate*, *Film Comment*, *American Cinematographer*, *Reverse Shot*, *Cinema Scope*...the list goes on!

They are the heart and soul of the film, so without further ado, lets get this interview started:

LD

So Chris, tell us about this *Killer Makeover* movie you asked me to direct, and how did it all start on the page?

CS

Well, I was working at a job where I was doing transcription and sitting in front of a computer all day. *Video Diary of a Lost Girl* was out, and it had gotten some notice at festivals. We were talking to Troma about releasing it. So I was like, maybe we could do something else with them? I had met with Lloyd Kaufman. We had talked about an idea called *Son of Killer Nerd*, basically a potential sequel to *Killer Nerd* and *Bride of Killer Nerd*. Lloyd was into it, but then the people that still held the rights to *Killer Nerd*, they weren't into it....

So, I was like, fuck...OK, *Son of Killer Nerd* is done. Then something new jumped into my mind about a beautician, and the idea came pretty quickly:

It's about a beautician. She gets cursed. She can only do make up on people that are dead already. She was like a Fran Drescher type, real New Jersey. Her and her best friend Josie, they're like, really crass!

And that was kind of the start of my idea.

Some of it came because I had met Sarah. I knew she was from New Jersey and she had kind of inspired this idea. We were friends, and she just had like, this cool personality. I could imagine this person doing this role. I wrote some stuff to Lindsay on g-chat, some of the early scenes of her getting kicked out at the beauty school.

SF

Yeah, Chris and I met at a micro cinema in Brooklyn, *Spectacle Theater*. It had become a community center for a certain type of movie freak. Chris was programming a lot of the midnight movies. A lot of horror comedy, just straight up horror, and a lot of Giallo...

This was like about 2013 I would say? There were a lot of horror and

exploitation movies being programmed. It was a real heyday for a sort of weird kind of basement movie, midnight movies, things of that nature.

CS

And like, cult-y lowbrow.

SF

Yeah, I mean even a place like *Anthology Film Archives* had a whole Russ Meyer program. Similarly, they brought over tons of movies from Italy for a Giallo series, it was incredible. Anyway, I digress...

Chris and I met with him programming a lot of the movies at *Spectacle*, and we would often sit in the back of the theater and chit chat.

I had really gotten into this kind of sleazy exploitation film, also horror comedies and stuff like that. Chris had been into this stuff for many, many years. He wasn't new to this, he was true to this! But I was sort of diving into it for the first time. I was in like my early, mid 20s.

He told me about this *Killer Makeover* idea, and I think a lot of it was because I was from New Jersey. I have these sort of vestiges of a Jersey accent, and smoking a lot of cigs, cursing a lot...

CS

Yes.

SF

...Drinking 40s a lot. I don't think that that had anything to do with the character, drinking a lot of 40s. I was wearing a leather jacket. I was kind of in a little bit of a mall goth phase. You know, you're like maybe working at *Spencer's* or *Hot Topic*...that kinda look.

CS

But a kind of a glamorous mall goth, which gave me part of the idea, because it's like you still had a certain, dare I say kind of... feminine look within a punkier mode of dressing. And being in your leather jackets and smoking your cigarettes. You had a unique thing going on you know, and you were funny.

SF

This is getting a little long winded, but basically somewhere along the way, Chris and I had been talking about movies, and he was telling me about this idea. He kept being like, "You know my friend Lindsay and I, we made this movie *Video Diary of a Lost Girl* together, and Lindsay's a great director! And *Killer Makeover* is going to be our next film...", et cetera, et cetera.

And then *Video Diary of a Lost Girl* got programmed by Cristina Cacciopa at 92Y in NY. I went knowing very little about it. I was already friends with Chris, but he hadn't really told me that much about the movie specifically. And when I saw it, I mean, it completely blew me away.

I feel like it changed what I thought a movie could achieve in terms of a lot of the formal aspects. I had never seen anything like it, and not coming from a filmmaking background, there were so many elements that I was like "What?"

The 92Y theater had a big screen too. It's not like we were watching this on a small computer screen or a small VHS TV combo or something. It was spangled over this huge expanse, and it was so impressive, and cool, and also really funny.



Left to right: Pris McEver (Louise of Video Diary of a Lost Girl), Chris and Lindsay giving a Q/A at the 92Y Theater, 2013.

The Louise character was really awesome to see as a young woman with a bit of a bad attitude. I was also collecting VHS tapes at the time and was into a lot of the films that Lindsay had featured in the movie's video store scenes. So that was really, really exciting.

And then I think I ended up seeing *Video Diary* a couple more times. Even Chris sent me a file! I was really getting into watching movies for

several days on end...just repeating them over, and over, and over again. *Psychos in Love* was a big one too. And also the Edvard Munch movie.

LD:

The Peter Watkins one?

SF:

Yeah!

LD:

Nice!

SF:

That's how I became aware of what you guys were doing. I saw *Video Diary* and I was like, holy shit...you really want me to like potentially...BE in a movie made by this person? Like, I couldn't like...yeah, I was like...that's crazy! You know?

Because, I wasn't an actor, by the way. I should say that. It wasn't like I had any real experience. So when you both asked me, I was like "Yeah! Fuck YEAH! I want to be in a movie. That would be awesome!"

CS

We we're getting closer, becoming better friends. And then eventually, we got romantically involved and started dating. But it was through movies, going to movies. Like we're running into each other at a Paul Naschy movie, which to me is very near and dear to my heart. You know, we would see each other at a ton of things. I remember an important one that we saw together with *Son of Frank*.

SF

Love *Son of Frank*. A sleazy movie with a heart of gold.

CS

And I think it was after we were officially dating that we started writing the film in earnest. One more thing is, I knew Sarah could do it because I just can tell, with people's personalities, if they're gonna be good or not.

Actors are great. The right actor can be a great collaborator. But sometimes it really is about someone's essence, you know. And I like films that do that. Herzog was one of my first big inspirations, and his relationship with Bruno S. The director Pasolini casts a lot of people just for their faces.

I knew that she could act. I could tell by the funny, performative aspect of her personality, you know? She was very funny.

SF

But also, I feel like you and Lindsay both are really good at casting non-actors. It's almost like not even the sort of textbook "working with a non actor" conversation that often gets thrown around. You know from Scorsese, or Pasolini, or whatever...

...It's coming from something else, I think because you were both part of a music scene where a lot of art and music was really performative. A lot of people were doing things that were kind of like quasi character work.

Especially you, Lindsay. What seems to appeal to you about making a movie is the community aspect. And also capturing something kind of fun and special about your friends, for posterity. How a friend can sort of deliver a joke, or show off, or dress up in a funny outfit. Show other people "Hey, everyone's group of friends is fun and cool like this! And you could put them in a movie too if you wanted to!" you know?

LD:

Hahaha, yes to all!

CS:

Amen. I think that's a really good way of putting it, because it was not like a "non" actor thing. It's more of a "punk" thing. You're like, well this person can definitely be ridiculous. And with you Sarah, you had such a particular way of speaking and attitude. And yeah, you were just so funny. I mean, the funniest person I've ever met. And to me, I'm like, I'm very competitive, with humor, you know? And I surround myself with the people that I think are the funniest people.

LD:

Speaking of funny, what about Phil Chernyak?



Left to right: Brian Golding, Phil Chernyak, Eric Carden and Chris Shields as Tony Sinatra and the Condolences.

SF

So Phil is someone that you guys went to film school with. Chris and Phil had written a script together previously called *Toppings*, it was a really fun, awesome pizza themed horror comedy that never ended up getting made. But who knows, maybe you could return to it someday?

CS:

Haha.

SF:

I feel like when the three of us actually sat down to write the script, you would think that someone had guns to our heads or something!

LD:

Hahaha!

SF:

It was like JOKE! Tell a JOKE! Another joke! You know...tell more jokes or DIE!

It was absolutely manic and insane! The initial draft of the script was completely wild. And Lindsay actually worked with us to reign it in.

CS:

Still ambitious, but not as crazy.

LD:

Haha, yes. I still find it ironic that I was the one saying "this might be a BIT much guys".

SF:

And you helped get it to a really good watchable pace, because it was just so madcap and insane! I think Chris, Phil and I writing together is the equivalent of a really wild car crash like in Blues Brothers or

something?

CS:

Well Sarah, you say gun to your head making a joke...

SF:

Haha

CS:

But I thought it was a like three class clowns in one place.

SF:

And we all had detention together!

CS:

Clowns with no Ringmaster! Eventually I kind of took that role in structuring how we would write it.

SF:

Over the course of like nine months, we would meet about once a week or every two weeks at a coffee shop, I think we even met at a *Panera* or something around Union Square.

CS

Yeah, because Sarah and I were living together in Williamsburg at this point. Phil would come there, we'd write for a long time and it was fun.

LD

I remember thinking that you guys were just eating tons of pizza.

SF

I wish we ate more pizza! This was not a pizza fueled script as one might think.

LD

That's so weird!

SF

I think it was more of like a sandwich and coffee fueled script.

LD:

That sounds more like writer's food.

CS

As wild of a jokester as Phil is, health wise he's very sensible, where we're not. We would have eaten just pizza. I think actually it was for the best that he didn't let us do that.



Tony (Chris Shields) enjoying a slice at the Funeral Home.

SF

It was really exciting, because I had never written anything in a script format before. And it was really cool to do it with Phil and Chris

because they both really knew what they were doing at a technical level. It was almost like, in a weird way, a little bit of an apprenticeship or something, because they just knew what they were doing so well.

And so it was cool to learn in the context of actually producing something in the end, and also like learning as I went. It was really exciting for me because they're just naturally, really good at it, and well trained by UCF film school.

CS

And by Professor Barry Sandler! The great screenwriter Barry Sandler (*Crimes of Passion*, *Kansas City Bomber*).

But I will say that Sarah is just a natural. She was so good at it. She had great jokes. She would always say that her thing was that she just wanted things to make sense!

LD

Haha, it was YOU all along Sarah!

CS

Yeah, she's like, I can't stand a movie when it gets to a place where it doesn't make sense.

SF

AND...I used to hate the early 2000s romantic comedies where suddenly just because the two leads were the two leads, we were supposed to believe that they really cared about each other, or that they had some sort of spark. But often times you wouldn't really see the moment or the moments that led up to them liking each other.

One thing that helped in *Killer Makeover* with Karen and Tony's romance, was that they have this really fun meet-cute. But it's also like

they're the only two people in this town that are like each other.

LD:

Hahaha.

SF

Yeah, it's like everyone in this town is like completely their own thing. Karen and Tony are both from Long Island or whatever spiritually from.

CS

I don't know if it was your idea, Lindsay, for me to play twins?

LD

It was my idea! I remember I sat on the idea for like a month, because I didn't want to mess with you, Sarah and Phil's creative flow.

CS

Yeah, you're like "What if these two characters at the funeral home are just twins?"

SF

Lindsay Lohan yourself!

LD

I remember the 'twin morticians' was an old idea you had back in college for a short film. So I thought it seemed like the perfect time to work that into *Killer Makeover* instead.

CS:

Oh yeah! At UCF I wanted to make this film called *Twin Morticians in Love!*

LD

Such a cute title.

CS:

Now that I'm older, I'm like, it's just *Dead Ringers*. But yeah, I had that potential film I was going to make, but it didn't happen. So I was really excited when Lindsay brought up the idea, these two brothers who work at a Funeral Home are now twins.

The character Vivian, the villain, was so fun and like the easiest thing for me, Sarah and Phil to write. We can joke in that kind of pompous, scumbag, snidely kind of mode.

LD

Typical villain in a movie.

SF

It's funny when you're crafting a bunch of different characters, and you realize one definitely comes through the clearest, like Vivian.

CS

I will say, Tony and Karen are like my parents, basically.

SF

They're also like characters from *Grease* a little bit. Not like that was really on our minds, but I think that that's a good reference point.

CS

Yeah, I think so too. I mean, when I conceived it, I was definitely thinking of my parents. Like, my mom had wanted to go to beauty school at a certain point.

LD

Oh, I forgot about that!

CS

Yeah, she wanted to be a beautician, and it didn't happen. And the character Tony (Vivian's twin) is definitely my dad. Like in the way he talks, with simple wisdom.



Karen (Sarah Fensom) witnessing the horror that her curse brings.

LD

He IS just like your Dad, haha!

CS

Yeah he's charming. He's a nice guy. He's not a 'genius'...

SF

He might have sung to a slice of pizza like Tony does in the embalming room scene!

CS

He definitely might have sung to a slice of pizza at some point in his

life! And my mom is a very nice person, but when you get to the core of her, she has a real "fuck you" attitude towards people. So I was like, how do I fuse my mom with Fran Drescher to create Karen?

LD

Haha.

CS

Because I think *The Nanny* is a more articulate and fun character. And then the character Josie (Karen's best friend) is based on my mom's best friend who passed away. Josie was her name, and I always thought that was a great name. It evokes a certain time in a certain place. You know Josie and the Pussycats. It's also very Grease. And that character, I was like what if we have a character like Karen, a version of her that's even more ridiculous...

SF

Yea!

CS

It helps, ya know?

SF

The Josie character is almost like, riffing Karen's life.

CS

Yeah.

LD

Haha.

SF

Karen's like, "I'm really trying hard to like figure this curse out!" And

Josie's like "I love you, but like, you think you're so cool?! I got problems too!"

CS

I wanted to have that real kind of relationship with people, where they're not even nice to each other, but they're still really good friends. They're pretty brutal with each other. They curse a lot, they're nasty. I wanted to see, honestly, women have that kind of relationship that's foul mouthed, tough, cool, like a bad girl kind of thing. I think Josie was the way to kind of make Karen more reasonable, kind of even sympathetic and likable.

SF

Bring her down to earth a little bit.

CS

Yeah, because Josie is just the ID. The other really fun character to write.

LD

What was it like when you guys met Shaina (Josie) the first time after you wrote her character? I casted her based on your early drafts. Met her while I was working at Odd Obsession and she just seemed perfect.

SF

Shaina is just such a special person, such a purely funny, confident person. She's like the perfect Josie, because she feels so assured about her life and her thing. Like she really feels like someone coming from a place of confidence. And I really admired just how comfortable she was and how just immediately great she was with what we had written. She really blew me away.

LD

She was very much the missing piece, I thought during her audition at the video store!

SF

Yeah, and just a fun person to talk too! Queen of the Nerds too!

CS

She is like sometimes my favorite part of the movie! She's amazing. She just gives so much. She looks so perfect. The voice is perfect. Her attitude, the way she handles the jokes! Sarah and her acting together, I watched them become friends on set. And it really works on screen.

LD

I felt big *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* vibes coming from them together.



Josie (Shaina Barshai) and Karen (Sarah Fensom) about to enter the Witch's haunted beach house.

SF

Shaina gave me a lot of confidence too, she was like "I got this!" I don't know exactly what her background was, but I know that she had performed quite a bit, and just bouncing off of her and seeing her handle it all.

I also felt really comfortable with her, which I think for me is a really, really big thing. Like, I feel like I can be really shy if I'm not comfortable, and then I can be a huge ham if I am comfortable. A Doctor Jekyll, Mr. Hyde kind of situation with me. Doctor Jekyll over Complicated.

CS

Doctor Jekyll and 'Ms. Ham'!

SF

She made me feel like I could figure things out as I went.

CS

It was great. When you write something, it's always difficult when you see people start to act it out, you know? With my own films, people don't talk really in them. I think it's hard to direct that, and it's hard to watch that jump from the page to the screen. I feel like Lindsay, you're a lot better at that. You're a great director.

LD

Thanks!

CS

But yeah, it's always weird at first to see your dialog be acted. But the more scenes we filmed with Sarah and Shaina together, I was like "This is perfect! This is classic!"

SF

I think it's also important to note that working with Phil was a big part of this, because he really pulls a lot from 60s and 70s comedy, 70s variety shows and stuff like that. And I feel like that really impacted the tone of the script. There's a PG innocence mixed with like a ribald...

CS

...Crassness?

SF

Yes, crassness! We were saying it's kind of like a John Waters movie mixed with a Disney Channel movie, you know? And I feel like Shaina and a number of the other people that you brought in Lindsay, we're really great, because they kind of had that *Hairspray* "thing". Where there's this wide eyed innocence, a *Grease 2* kind of vibe.

CS

And yeah, they're just weird people in real life too.

LD

I only work with weird people.

SF

I feel like it was really important to keep that tone going from the script to the people that we were bringing in. And I feel like you did a really good job, Lindsay, getting those people together!

LD

Thank you! I did want to do a shout out to Erica Gressman, the Producer AND Art Director of a *Killer Makeover*, a real powerhouse of talent!



Erica Gressman (Producer / Art Director) as Madame Carmichael.

She's the one who found Clark, who plays Grandpa Georgie, at a bar one night! She spotted him in the distance dancing crazy, an older gentleman, care-free hardcore punk, pumping up the jams and such! She's like "Lindsay! I found Grandpa Georgie! You MUST cast this man!"

CS

That's awesome!

LD

What was the inspiration for Grandpa Georgie actually? Where did that character come from?

CS

I think that's just pure Adam Sandler, you know what I mean? I mean, I was thinking about you, Lindsay, a lot...because it was a movie for YOU to direct! I want to have things that I know that you like.

LD

Awww, I felt that!

CS

Things you like that we share as friends. We both like our low key Sandler movies, the kind of classic films of our youth or whatever. They're nice movies for nice people, you know?

SF

For me, I thought a lot about like, Ernest Borgnine when writing Grandpa Georgie. And Eddie Albert in *How to Beat the High Cost of Living*. A guy who's playing poker with the guys, wears a captain's hat, chomps on a cigar or something.

He's a real man's man. He's a gay dude. He's living his best life, and very proud of who he is. Like, maybe he was in the military at some point when he was younger? He's real tough. Like a big hairy forearms kind of dude, but also extremely sweet. He raised his granddaughter Karen all by himself, and now his dying wish is he really wants to go on a BDSM cruise!

LD

A tale as old as time...

CS

I was thinking *Purple People Eater* and Neil Patrick Harris's relationship with his grandpa. And it's such a Sandler thing, too. "Hey everybody, I got to do this for Grandma!" It's literally the plot of *Happy Gilmore*, you know?

They're sacred! It's easier too, because they're not your parents. It's a less problematic relationship, it seems, than with a parent, you know?

SF

It's not as much baggage.



Grandpa Georgie (Clark Lasswell) and Karen (Sarah Fensom) hanging out.

CS

Yeah, not as much baggage! What Karen's doing and why she's doing it is very sweet. Even though she's super foul mouthed, she's working at a funeral home to save up money for his dying wish on the BDSM cruise.

It's like a sleazy AND nice world!

SF

The grandparent idea makes whatever mission Sandler is on not seem vain. The pursuit doesn't seem like there's something negative or arrogant motivating it.

I think that was a good backbone for Karen's 'Hero's Journey', I guess. It didn't seem like "Oh, I'm just trying to prove that I'm the

best, or I'm just out for revenge!" Having the dying grandparent to rest everything on, honestly, it's a huge help. It made it a lot easier.

CS

Yeah, because then the character can be pretty ridiculous, but still has a nice sentiment at the center of it. And it's also a motivator, for her to get a ridiculous job at the funeral home. Like she needed a reason to push her to do that.

SF

There's no *LinkedIn* in this world, people. There's no *Staff Me Up*, you know? *Monster.com* DOES exist in this world.

LD

Haha, it does! Only REAL monsters get hired though.

CS

To talk about Phil more in the writing process, he's very funny. So he's coming up with so many great jokes and really funny dialogue, and turns of phrase that are very memorable. But he's also good at connecting the dots, you know? How do we get from here to here?

SF

He's very practical.

CS

Yeah, Practical. But I think he really shines. And I think this is the real art of screen writing. We all try and learn this together. What's the way you can get from here to here? He doesn't waste space.

SF

Can we talk a little bit about like what it was like on set and a little bit about the process of shooting?

LD

Yeah!

SF

So it was really exciting being on set. Chris and I were in Chicago for four weeks. I had actually never been to Chicago before, and I really, really liked it there. You showed us a great image of the city.

CS

Yeah.

SF

And we shot a lot in Lindsay's apartment that she was sharing with several of the people who also worked on the film.

LD

Yeah, a real Rainer Werner Fassbinder-like art collective, minus the cocaine and abuse.

Our friends Erica Gressman lived there (Producer and Art Director), Jimmy Schaus (2nd Assistant Director, Sound Designer) and Tim Dukes (The Master Chef). At the end of the day. But everyone was always helping with a little bit of everything. Everyone did boom sound for sure.

SF

Yea, shooting at the apartment was great because it created a really intimate setting, and we could kind of 'work' in there whenever, and things went long. It was totally fine because it was a really small group of people, just in this space. And Lindsay, you really transformed these spaces in all manner of things. I don't want to go too much into how the sausage is made, because some of it is just

Lindsay's "magic hands"!

CS

Haha!

LD

And if I told you, I'd have to kill you...

SF

Yeah! There were fabrics stapled to walls everywhere. A filling up of all negative space. Kind of like what you were saying Chris, with the scriptwriting, filling it up with 'fun'...with 'pizzazz'!

CS

Yeah, yeah!

SF

Things that make it seem memorable, you know?



Karen (Sarah Fensom) depressed about getting kicked out of beauty school.

CS

I want to say there's something Sarah's said a lot, that I think is really appropriate here.

What you learned, and you can really learn this working with Lindsay, is that the only thing that matters is what the camera sees.

SF

Yeah!

LD

That is...correct!

CS

And that becomes a 'way' to create more fantasy and more magic! Just kind of imply something beyond with what you place in the frame.

SF

Yeah, that was hugely instructive and it seems like that's the most basic lesson or whatever. But I feel like on set I learned it really hard, and it has been really helpful as I've worked with friends on other films, you know?

CS

Yeah.

SF

And you guys take such good advantage of just the eye of the camera, and how it just eats up what it sees.

And it doesn't matter if it seems like artifice. Like, that's kind of the point. It becomes its own reality once the camera looks at it.

CS

And living in the place where you're making a film is really an intense experience.

SF

It's like living in a dream, kind of.

CS

Exactly, it was also winter in Chicago, which is intense. So we're in this cocoon almost, you know?

LD

Cocoon, Origins!

CS

And I feel like even when people want to talk to us about *Video Diary of a Lost Girl*...they act like it's like a 'normal' movie. And it's not, you know?

LD

Uh huh.

CS

You're making a no-budget experimental film with friends, over the course of like a month. And then with you Lindsay, it continues for a long time after with post. But in the time of the shooting, you're all living together. This is a 'collective' thing that you're doing, that doesn't function like a normal movie.

LD

Yup.

CS

Like, on a big film, when money is changing hands, you have to follow labor laws, I'm a huge believer in that!

SF

Yeah, for sure!

CS

But if you're doing something with your friends for fun, you get to make the rules, you know? You fall asleep and wake up the same place that you're shooting, and everything that we did was inventing a new way to film something. Because we have a few rooms, and all the boxes of junk that Lindsay has collected over the years. You know, like a fake skeleton hand...

SF

...Should we talk about *The Dead Box*?

CS

Yeah, *The Dead Box*! Lindsay loves her Dead Box!

LD

Haha. I do love my *Dead Box*!

CS

Which is just a box of like...

SF

...morbid things?

CS

Morbid things, yeah!

SF

Like bones, or...a contorted monster mask or something.

CS

Yeah, like a bloody fake knife. A dolls head...I mean, we made like fake telephones by just taping things together.

LD

Haha, the fake telephones were all you Chris! My favorite one you made had a taped on skeleton jaw for the speaker end of the phone. So elegant...



Chris as Vivian (Tony's evil twin) on his office skeleton phone.

SF

So much tape...

CS

Yeah, I mean, I love to tape things together. Erica is also a great fabricator and Art Director. She made all the big stuff!

LD

Yeah she made the tiki bar, the coffins, the bar in the diner, candelabras, the list goes on! She runs her own set building and fabrication business now called Rainbolt Productions!

SF

She can do anything!

CS

Yeah! But then besides that, it's just crafts. It's just making stuff around the house and putting it in front of the camera, you know?

LD

For me, it's just kind of normal shit I do around the house, the 'craft' stuff. I do remember a funny moment on set though - we needed a steering wheel prop for the interior of the hearse.

CS

Yeah!

LD

I'm just curious, do either of you guys remember the random materials I ended up using to make it?

SF

Something fuzzy?

CS

Pipe cleaners?

LD

Pipe cleaners were definitely involved! It was mainly a broken wired

face from a portable fan, and I covered it with fabric from my zebra print pajamas. And then I took a stretchy hot pink exercise band to outline it.

SF

Uh huh?

LD

It took like twenty minutes or so to throw together. And as I was finishing it up, Chris was standing over me and said something like "Can we just all take a pause and look at WHAT is happening here?"

CS

Yeah, yeah!

SF

Haha! Yes!

LD

And then I take a moment, look at it, and am like "Yea, this is kind of nuts!"

SF

There was a point where you took a pair of tights, cut the crotch out of it and we're just like "put this on as a shirt Shaina!"

LD

Haha! That was because we forgot her wardrobe box that day at *No Nation*, our only other shooting location! We had to remake most of her wardrobe on the spot because a lot of her scenes were scheduled that day!

CS

Wow!



Shaina as Josie (wearing the repurposed Video Diary leggings as a top)

SF

Yea, I remember Shaina all of a sudden had this really great top, and I was like "Where the fuck did this come from?" You just took these leggings and made it a shirt!

LD

Haha, those were actually the same leggings Louise wore in *Video Diary of a Lost Girl*. Never let anything go to waste!

SF

Yea, there was a lot of alchemy going on set. Things getting turned into other things, better things! Lindsay, you're like....if someone took the arts and crafts class at a weirdo summer camp...but you got a PhD in it.

CS

Yeah, yeah!

LD

Haha...and I STILL got crippled by student debt.

CS

But to wrap things up with the writing, we gave Lindsay a draft, and it was pretty wild. Some really big set pieces in it.

SF

A huge movie too, I don't know what we were thinking!

CS

Yea Lindsay, you did a really economical and smart rewrite.

LD

Awww, thank you!

SF

And added more heart for sure.

CS

Yeah, you gave it the "Dennibergian" flair, you know? The romance, the comedy, the likability of the characters. I feel like you gave it a lot, you know?

SF

Like if Kevin Smith got a period...

CS

Hahaha!

LD

Hahaha!

Nothing more true has ever been said.

CS

Wow. Damn. Yeah.

SF

Kevin Smith dealing with cramps.

CS

Wow.

LD

Haha, I hope he reads this someday!

SF

I should say, *Video Diary* is like probably the best slacker movie that's been made in 30 years. It took really the best of the best from the 90s slacker movies that everybody grew really tired of...this relentless barrage of like, white male problems...

LD

Haha!

SF

...and white male victories, too. All those guys are just having a great time.

CS

And get all the hot chicks!

SF

But I feel like you take that slacker energy from a lot of those great movies that we all liked in the 90s, and you are bringing it into something that's really interesting formally.

CS

Yeah.

SF

It's funny, now that *Video Diary* is out on blu-ray...and Lindsay, hehe, I know we both occasionally look at the Letterboxd reviews!

LD

Haha, yea I look at them pretty regularly...

SF

But sometimes I see a review on there, where it seems like they don't get, like, that this is NOT an A24 funded film, you know?

LD

Hahaha, no way! I wish!

SF

This isn't even like, a \$20,000 independent movie!

LD

This is more of a....\$5,000 - \$7,000 movie...plus endless favor trading!

SF

You could get like a decent Honda Accord on resale, that was like maybe seven or eight years old?

CS

Yeah, and it doesn't have hubcaps!

LD

Haha, sometimes I think "Fuck. I wish I had a car!". It's been like, fifteen years since I've had one? But then I'm like, "Oh, you made movies instead of having a car, DUH Lindsay!"

CS

Yeah, exactly! And movies can take you to better places anyways.

SF

I do think in some ways I really wish I could shake the audience and say "This movie was made for nothing! Do you understand?!"

CS

"You fool! NOTHING!"

SF

"NOTHING!"

LD

HAHAHA!

SF

And you make it really easy Lindsay, 'cause you're like very enthusiastic, which sounds like a weird thing. Like you think, oh, wouldn't every director be like that?

Part of your directing style is you're already a fan of the characters.

CS

Yeah!

LD

Haha, I am a fan! I read all the fan-fiction too!

SF

You're like "This character is someone I think is cool in real life!"

LD

Haha, I remember at one point when I was setting you up for a shot Chris, and as I'm getting you placed perfectly in the frame, you laugh and say "Oh, Lindsay and her dolls....".

CS

Hahaha, yeah, yeah, yeah!

LD

"...like Fellini".

CS

Yeah, yeah, exactly! You are really enthusiastic, you seem confident, like you know what you want. That's why I think you're just such a great director.

LD

Aw, thank you!



Lindsay doing her Hitchcock cameo at the funeral home.

CS

You know, you're the best I've worked with. I mean, you want that as an actor. You want to trust the director. You want to know that they care about you.

LD

I always want the person to have fun playing the character! It makes it fun for me too!

SF

Yeah, I think it's your enthusiasm and just your kind of presence. You're really in the scene too when you're directing.

And again, that seems like, "Oh, wouldn't every director be like that?"

CS

Nope.

SF

You're staying with what the actor is doing. It's like each take is "OK! This is going to fucking rock! Let's do it!"

LD

The hardest thing for me to figure out is how many takes before someone gets exhausted or loses the moment.

CS

Haha, yeah.

LD

And also, how many takes do they need to even GET to the moment? I usually find on average everyone needs between 3-5 takes. It usually only becomes more if there's a tech issue, or improvisation is being worked in, or something.

SF

It took a long time for me until fatigue or like annoyance set in, you know?

LD

The excitement keeps you going!

SF

The most red tape that I had to deal with was managing the makeup continuity, wiping off one look and putting on another look between scenes.

LD

I'm sure I didn't help when I would come in like a hurricane grabbing make-up for another scene, and messing up how you

organized the make-up case!

SF

Haha, lipstick isn't designed to just be, like, out in the open, huh?

LD

Haha, sorry you suffered my mania! Make-up was definitely harmed in the making of this film!

CS

Yeah, when you're shooting, nothing else seems important, you know what I mean?

LD

Yeah!

CS

Sometimes, you're just going and going, and like, you want to eat or whatever. But like, a lot of times, someone has to stop you and say, "Hey, you have to eat lunch now.", you know?

LD

Tim did such a great job on the craft service. He was taking cooking classes for fun at the time, so I bought a bunch of food and asked him to try out new recipes for us! Such a life saving luxury! Thank you so much Tim!

We had such a small cast and crew to begin with too, that near the end of shooting, just three of us were the shooting crew! Acting, sound, camera, directing, all of it...

CS

Yeah, yeah!

LD

And since we had less people to feed, at some point we were all just making each other sandwiches.

CS

I like when it's just very few people. You know what I mean? And then some people come in for a day or two to act or help with crew. That usually injects a kind of fun to it that keeps you going. You're looking forward to another friend showing up!

LD

Haha, like a visiting lecturer!



Casey Puccini as Nataly the freelance hit man.

SF

Yeah, after *Killer Makeover*, I helped Chris on other micro-budget films, and you realize that every person that's on set adds money and time. The more people you have on set, the more

people you have to check in with. Because you just want to make sure everyone's doing okay, and that you're not pushing anyone's limits or whatever, because you're asking a lot from people, you know?

LD

I've always felt the Producer and Assistant Director are the most important for me to find. I found a great Producer in Erica, but I couldn't find anyone for Assistant Director, so I figured I'd just make due without one this time, cause I had no choice, you know?

Ironically, it wasn't until hindsight when I was animating the opening credits, that I was like "Oh yea! Sarah was my Assistant Director the whole time, duh!"

SF

Yeah!

LD

You were acting full-time and also helped me so much with everything as a Director. So I'm like, of course to me that is assistant directing, you know?

SF

Haha, just putting things in place.

LD

Haha, so many hats. Hats on hats!

SF

Even just holding things.

CS

Someone's gotta hold it.

LD

Haha! My next question for you both, is how different was the script in your heads versus what you saw in the final cut?

CS

I'm shocked how similar it is. Once we got the good final draft, after your rewrite Lindsay. It's really like word for word so true to what we wrote! I think it benefits from that. Because I mean, we worked for a long time on it. It was really worked over a lot.

SF

It was like, three 'real' drafts I would say. The one Chris, Phil and I did, the one you rewrote Lindsay, and then the final combo draft we ended up shooting. And I mean, each one was different, it definitely got worked pretty hard.

CS

And now when I see it, it's like every fucking scene "boom, boom, boom!" It works for me!

LD

Haha, like a 'real' movie!

CS

Haha, I think it's so solid, you know? And then even Lindsay, you and I cutting and trimming the edit. It is spiritually more true to what I thought it would be.

LD

I felt at moments like Ratatouille, where you were like pulling my

hair or something.

CS

Haha, yeah, yeah!

SF

To me, it feels exact. The only things that were unexpected were some of the postproduction artwork things that you did. Some stuff you took in directions that I wasn't expecting, which was really cool. That's really an exciting part about it.



Tony (Chris) and Karen (Sarah) having a romantic night in the cemetery.

CS

I mean, it feels almost like, classic, larger than life to me. I mean, I'm just so happy with it.

SF

Again, this is like not my area of expertise, but I kind of feel like

with a comedy, the editing is very, very crucial.

CS

Oh yeah.

SF

Now that some time has passed since we shot it, Chris and I will like, quote things from the movie to each other, like...it's not our movie!

I feel like you don't want to do that around too many people, 'cause it's kind of a bad look, but it's been really funny for us.

CS

It's interesting that it ends up at that place, because, that's always my idea for writing, or even directing certain people. Write it and perform it as if it already exists. As if you're already quoting it, because you want it to feel like it's not an attempt. You want to feel like it's already successful.

SF

Like, already worn in and loved in appreciation.

CS

Yeah. Not that it's like "LOVE ME!" You know what I mean?

LD

Haha, yes! When I do read the Letterboxd reviews for *Video Diary of a Lost Girl*, the nicest ones are saying something like "You could tell a lot of love went into making this film".

CS

Aw!

LD

Another Letterboxd review that rang very true for me said "This was either made by a lunatic or an art student."

CS

Wow!

SF

Wow! A lunatic and an art student? Yeah. Are they not the same? Change the OR to an AND baby, and you got it!

CS

Haha!

LD

Last question! Do you two have any other projects you are working on that you'd like to talk about?

CS

Well, I have my feature film I'm finishing up called *Morbid Weekend*, very different than *Killer Makeover* and *Video Diary of a Lost Girl*. Basically, no dialogue, it's a slower, more durational movie, but it's got the same kind of cinema romantic heart to it, you know?

Lindsay gave me great notes. Sarah is a huge part of it. Working with friends in LA! It's aesthetically very different than *Killer Makeover*, but again, it's part of the same brain, you know? So yeah, I'm very excited.

SF

I'm working on a novel right now, but I'm not ready to talk about

too many details of that. So the next thing that we want to do is kind of based on a script that I'm writing, about an art and film writer, and dealing with their big stupid problems. And it's not autobiographical, but it is in many ways based on our lives in LA.

We will ideally be acting in it. It'll be shot in our apartment, with our clothes, with our friends. Bring the scale of the production down so much to our own real lives. The drama of the narrative unfolds within the world that we've already created in our real life. So that it's very accessible for us to make something within those parameters.

CS

Yeah, yeah. A much more dialogue driven kind of project too. That's really exciting.

LD

That's how Casey Puccini does his movies! It's like he kind of uses his life as a template, bare bones, and then builds off of it! His feature *I Don't Care* is showing at Whammy, Analog in LA on July 27th!

CS

Yeah! I'm really excited because it's a different mode, and kind of a part of myself I haven't really accessed in a while. You know, something naturalistic.

SF

Hopefully we'll pull it off and do it this year or early next year. The idea is to take the model that we learned from doing *Morbid Weekend*, and apply it to a different type of film. But keep that scale.

And again, make it so that part of the creativity is realizing and executing what we can actually do with very limited monetary resources, but great resources in terms of talented friends.

CS

Yeah, for sure.

LD

That's always the secret ingredient to filmmaking. Maybe it's not so secret? Creative friends!

CS

Haha.

SF

It helps to have friends who are, like, more talented than you.

CS

Haha, yeah!

SF

And living really close, creating their own music, and doing their own films. It really, really, really helps to have those people around.

CS

Oh my God, yeah.

SF

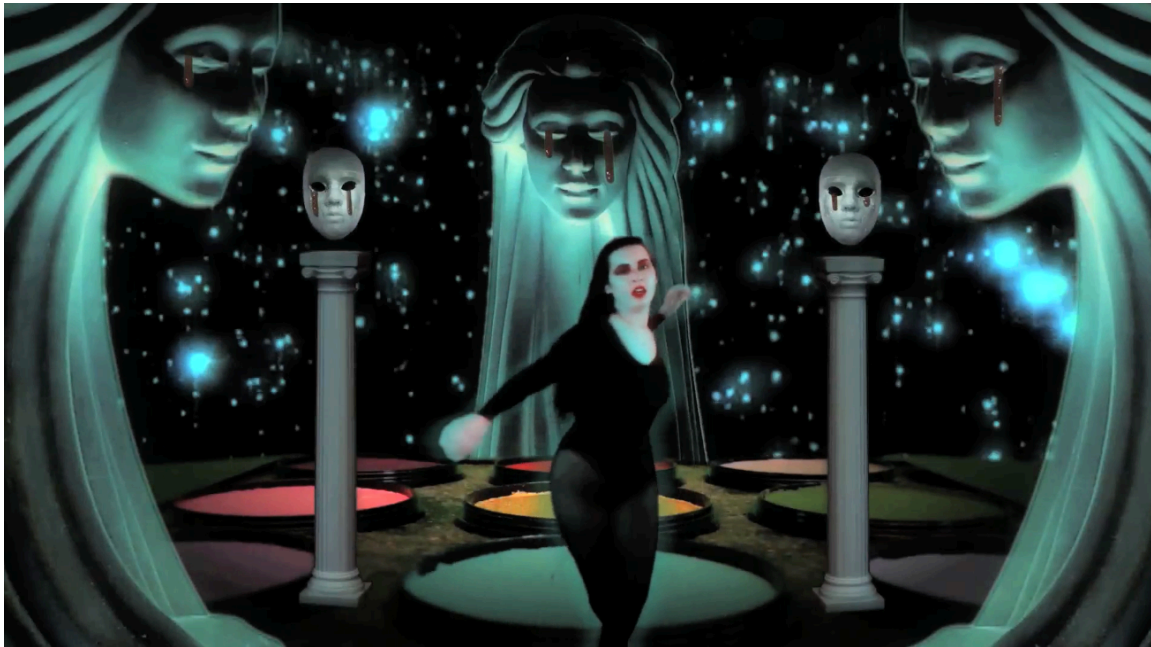
And hopefully, we can maybe do a favor for them too? So that they kind of owe you? That's the ideal.

LD

The 'favor trading of creative talent account' starts to add up. For me that can be exhausting after awhile, but also, it feels satisfying and more meaningful too.

CS

Yeah!



Karen (Sarah Fensom) trying to escape the curse.

LD

The postpartum / postproduction depression is very real for me! Once the film is done, I start to feel so lost...and the urge to make another movie baby rises!

I should probably talk to my therapist about that...

CS

I remember there was something you read Sarah, about childbirth? Where your brain gives you a bit of amnesia?

SF

Haha, yeah, so you don't remember the pain and how intense it was!

CS

Yeah, that's how it is with making films too, you know? Once the film starts to get out in the world and people are liking it, you start saying "You know what? We could do it again!", you know?

LD

Haha "What's ONE more, right?!"

CS

"Honestly, it was FINE, we can do it again!
Come on!"

LD

"Why not?!"

"Let's just do it!"

LET'S MAKE ANOTHER MOVIE!"

CS

Haha! I don't think there's really anything negative about that.
That's actually the productive drive.

SF

I think at the risk of sounding a bit cheesy...one of the really special things for me was you guys gave me the gift of seeing first hand how fun being on set is!

How fun it is working together. It really is the most fun I've ever had, you know? One of the most, fun, special times of my life.

CS

Yeah!

LD

Same here! I miss those times often!

CS

I look forward to doing it again. It's a wonderful, memorable part of our friendship, you know?

LD

Aww!

CS

This *Killer Makeover* is a huge part of our lives, and I'm just really excited. Proud is an understatement.

SF

For sure!

LD

Awww! Now I'm all verklempt guys!!! Thank you so much for answering my questions guys!

CS

My pleasure!

SF

You're welcome! This was so much fun!

CS

Wait, Lindsay!

Don't YOU also have something coming up too?

LD

Oh yeah...DUH! Plug time:

My TV show *What's Inside Pandora's Talk Box?* is screening all summer long at Whammy, Analog in LA!

The poster features a central image of a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white robe, sitting in a meditative pose. She is surrounded by a vibrant, multi-colored aura. Above her, the word "WHAMMY!" is written in a stylized, blocky font, followed by "Presents:". On either side of the central figure are two ornate, dark-colored pedestals, each holding a glowing orange orb. Below the central image, the title "WHAT'S INSIDE PANDORA'S TALK BOX?" is written in a bold, white, blocky font. Underneath the title, the words "What's Inside Pandora's Talk Box" are written in a colorful, stylized font. To the right of the title is a small illustration of a woman in a black and white outfit. Below the title, the text "10 EPISODE SERIES" is written in a bold, black, blocky font. Underneath that, the text "FROM THE DIRECTOR OF VIDEO DIARY OF A LOST GIRL" is written in a bold, black, blocky font. To the right of this text is a small logo that looks like a stylized "W" inside a square. Below the text, the phrase "SCREENING ALL SUMMER AT WHAMMY!" is written in a bold, black, blocky font. At the bottom of the poster, there are three columns of text indicating the screening schedule: "JUNE 29 EP 1 - 3", "JULY 27 EP 4 - 6", and "AUGUST 31 EP 7 - 10". The background of the poster is a mix of dark and light colors, with a large, stylized "W" shape in the center.

WHAMMY! Presents:

WHAT'S INSIDE PANDORA'S TALK BOX?

What's Inside Pandora's Talk Box

10 EPISODE SERIES

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
VIDEO DIARY OF A LOST GIRL

SCREENING ALL SUMMER AT WHAMMY!

JUNE 29
EP 1 - 3

JULY 27
EP 4 - 6

AUGUST 31
EP 7 - 10

It's a TEN episode spinoff of *Video Diary of a Lost Girl!* Kind of a psychedelic MST3K inspired sitcom, but for underground experimental video, films and performances!

A few of the artists whose work is featured in the show will also be co-presenting their films as well. Chris being one of them! His work is screening on August 31st!

CS

I'm so excited!

SF

And stay tuned for Killer Makeover, hitting Festivals 2025!

LD

Visit www.pandorastalkbox.com for updates! Bye!!!