

Exclusive pics/comments: SXSW short “CHILD EATER”

Written by Michael Gingold
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With a title like that, you know you’re in for a bit of no-holds-barred horror, and we’ve got the goods on a creepy short that’s headed for the South by Southwest Film Festival, with a couple of exclusive stills and an eye-popping behind-the-scenes shot.

Set to screen on Saturday, March 9 at [SXSW](#), CHILD EATER takes off from the time-honored scenario of a little boy who believes the bogeyman is lurking in his closet—and this time, he’s right. Cait Bliss stars as Helen, a babysitter who first tries to assuage the fears of little Lucas (Cameron Ocasio, the “BBQ Boy” from one of SINISTER’s Super-8 films), and then must fight to protect him from the Child Eater. Written and directed by Erlingur Thoroddsen and produced by Perri Nemiroff, CHILD EATER also stars Dan Reiss as Helen’s boyfriend Tom and Boomer Tibbs as Robert Bowery, a.k.a. the malevolent titular spirit.



“CHILD EATER is our non-thesis film for our MFA degrees from Columbia University,” Nemiroff explains. The program requires that students on the producing track take a course in feature-film development; we’re supposed to find a script that another student wrote and workshop it in the class. I was determined to do this with a horror script, and considering there aren’t many horror filmmakers in the program, my search lead me directly to Erlingur.”

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“Horror films are very rare in the program,” Thoroddsen notes, “but we are both huge genre fans and wanted to do something we were totally passionate about. Something that was scary, entertaining and just a little gory. For inspiration, I took my cues from the original HALLOWEEN and A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, and tried to come up with something that was both in the vein of those types of late-’70s/early-’80s slashers and also its own thing. It’s definitely a little love letter to the genre.”



To help achieve that vision, Thoroddsen and Nemiroff assembled what the director calls “a dream team of collaborators.” Cinematographer J. Wakayama Carey and production designer Ramsey Scott helped give CHILD EATER the look and feel of a polished horror feature, with Fiona Tyson handling the grisly makeup FX. The producers are also thrilled with the work of their cast, particularly Ocasio, whose youth was a cause for a bit of concern as they headed into production.

“One of my worries was having a kid on set, and exposing him to all our gory makeup effects,” Thoroddsen admits. “I was seriously afraid that we’d traumatize Cameron, so I made sure his mother knew exactly what we were going to be doing and what he would be seeing. She told me it was totally fine; he’d seen much worse when he had been cast in SINISTER a few months earlier. So both he and his family were totally OK with what we were planning to do! It didn’t hurt that we had the hilarious and super-talented Fiona Tyson [pictured below], who really lightens the atmosphere when there’s a bunch of blood and guts hanging around. She rose to the occasion big-time; her work is fantastic on a super-low budget.”



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"It was also a little awkward on set when we shot the camp and woods material at a local day school," Nemiroff adds. "There were little kids running around while Robert Bowery was lurking through the halls. We were very careful, though, and luckily they never crossed paths."

Set entirely at night, and shot in the dead of last winter on Long Island, CHILD EATER presented some chilling challenges to its creators—which they handily surmounted. "Considering our conditions and budget, we pulled off some amazing feats," Thoroddsen says. "It was cold and dark—very, very dark. At one point we were filming deep in a ditch, with only a very loud generator supplying us with electricity—a little scary at times, but fitting for the film. Once our lights were turned off, we basically couldn't see anything, which was kind of exciting!"

"Putting the pieces together for production was a lot of work," Nemiroff says, "but everything came together rather seamlessly. Erlingur and I were always on the same page with the story and what we wanted to achieve with the film, so that helped propel everything forward in the best possible way."

CHILD EATER has already had successful screenings at other fests, as Thoroddsen recalls: "Seeing it play to an audience for the first time at the Columbia University Film Festival last May—where we won the IFP Audience Choice Award—was totally exhilarating, and such a relief after all the hard work. A couple of months later, we got an even bigger audience and louder reactions at the Reykjavik International Film Festival, where the jury gave us an honorable mention. And right now, we're crazy excited about taking it to SXSW. We're sure it'll be an eye-popping experience!" See CHILD EATER's trailer below, and visit its [official website](#)

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