Welcome to the set!” crows STAKE LAND director Jim Mickle upon seeing Fango arrive at a Pennsylvania farmhouse. “The final day of the shoot; how exciting!” It’s actually the end of just one leg of the multipart filming of STAKE LAND (currently playing festival dates and opening theatrically next year from Dark Sky Films, which produced it with Larry Fessenden’s Glass Eye Pix), and a blisteringly cold night in September—the kind of complete, consuming darkness that only comes with the absence of streetlights. In other words, the perfect climate for a vampire attack.

As this scribe tries to navigate the unfamiliar terrain lit almost exclusively by the lights of the property’s lone house, we literally walk right into Nick Damici, the film’s co-writer (with Mickle) and star. For the past couple of months, Damici has been camping out behind that house, trying to get into the mindset for his role of Mister—a rogue vampire hunter who becomes the caretaker of teenager Martin (played by GOSSIP GIRL’s Connor Paolo).

“This is the scene where I find Martin,” he says. “I’m hunting a vampire, and it attacks his family and kills them. They’re trying to escape because the radio is broadcasting stuff about the plague, telling them to go to this high school because the National Guard has it locked up. While they’re trying to leave, the vampire gets them in the barn. Yesterday we shot a scene where a head goes through a glass door, which was great.” STAKE LAND’s scenario sees Mister and Martin subsequently trekking north toward hoped-for safety, picking up a few companions along the way: Sister Anna, a nun played by Kelly McGillis; pregnant Belle (Danielle Harris); and young Marine Willie (Sean Nelson).

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