

## Exclusive: Robert Longstreet on "THE CATECHISM CATAclysm"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
Wednesday, 19 October 2011 16:08

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A truly bizarre tale of hero worship, Todd Rohal's *THE CATECHISM CATAclysm* hits limited release today via IFC Midnight (and On Demand Oct 26), and it really is something else. Chronicling a priest's trip down a river with a childhood (not really) friend, it's a silly, horrific, often indescribable journey that Fango got to discuss—amongst plenty other topics—with star and very busy, unsung indie actor Robert Longstreet.

"Storytelling in all its forms is skewered in *THE CATECHISM CATAclysm*. In this divinely bizarre and funny tale, wild characters infuse stories within stories until the lines between the Bible, Mark Twain, and campfire tales are hilariously blurred."

"Father Billy (Steve Little), an eccentric young priest, is forced to take a sabbatical by his superiors when he is discovered telling inappropriate parables to his flock. Billy tracks down his high-school idol Robbie (Robert Longstreet), who begrudgingly agrees to a canoe trip. On the water, the two men reminisce about Billy's days as the keyboardist in a Christian band and Robbie's as a guitarist for a metal band. When night approaches, they realize they have lost their way—and that's when things get weird."

**FANGORIA:** *CATECHISM* and a film you did earlier this year, *SEPTIEN* are films very much on the fringe, and out there, and it's exciting to see actors dive into material like this. What attracts you to that?

**ROBERT LONGSTREET:** I only want to do stuff that I've never seen before. I've turned down probably ten or fifteen films this year, I got a bunch of offers after Sundance and if it has a wedding in it, if it's guys talking in diners, I just don't give a shit. I love that they both do 180's. I love when you think you're watching one movie and then it completely flips over at the end. As an audience member, that really turns me on. To go in thinking I'm watching something else and watch it completely change. It's the unexpected. And both these guys are so bizarre. Ezra in *SEPTIEN*, is a mommy. He's effeminate, but not like West Hollywood gay; he's like a matriarch. I'm actually playing my girlfriends' mothers, from high school and college.

**FANG:** So what do you bring to these roles that may be kind of absurd? Are you simply playing the page?

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**LONGSTREET:** I always look for the pathology. I'm really interested in where characters hate themselves, or what their hang-ups are, what they can't let go, where they're not free. I love playing mean people because they just hate themselves. People who go around saying awful things to people and they're being negative. Can you imagine what they're saying to themselves in their heads? It's got to be a battleground.

**FANG:** And Robbie, in CATECHISM, is essentially being forced to confront everything that's wrong with himself.

**LONGSTREET:** Yeah, and I watch that movie sometimes and it's hard to watch because Steve is so sweet, and I'm so awful to him. That character, the whole thing I thought about was him just sitting alone, staring at the walls, missing his kids, because his wife took them. I love that he's a spotlight operator. He used to have the spotlight on him and now all he does is aim it on other people and forget his dreams. He's just depressed to the core.

**FANG:** It's great that Steve's character is also confronted with just how shitty Robbie is, like Robbie is at first more God to him than God despite being a priest. It's almost him being confronted with the idea there might not be a god.

**LONGSTREET:** What I always loved about it was, it's that thing of, "be careful of meeting your heroes or worshipping anyone." The fact that anybody else is happier than you in the world, because of what they've done, or whatever aura is around them, it's not necessarily true. You could be having a way better life than all the people you admire.



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**FANG:** How long were you guys on the river?

**LONGSTREET:** I think four days. It was on location at Fort Washington. We were on the river, we had a canoe attached to a raft. That was a two-camera shoot and a bunch of people were in the raft. One time we flipped and wrecked a whole day. Steve and I got thrown out as quick as a washing machine. And he's got the life vest and helmet, because of his character. I just went down and smashed a rock and cut my head open. We were laughing. They were all horrified and we came up laughing. I think it looked really bad.

**FANG:** Both SEPTIEN and CATECHISM are this off-kilter kind-of horror. What's your own history with the genre?

**LONGSTREET:** I've loved horror forever. I was one of those weird kids that always had horror magazines and whenever I was sick when I was little, my mom would get me monster models and I'd put those together. I'd sneak down and watch creature features at night. I just loved that stuff, like the bloodier and weirder the better.

**FANG:** Speaking of bloody and weird, you're also in THE OREGONIAN, which played Sundance earlier this year and is apparently very inaccessible.

**LONGSTREET:** That movie is just socially unacceptable [*laughs*]. I play a guy on a farm, I play Lindsay Pulsipher's husband and another sweet, little beautiful girl that I'm mean to in that movie. I'm just this paranoid drunk and I think she's having sex with this green creature that I've seen running around. I just have one scene in that where I'm so mean and insane to her.

**FANG:** I feel like I've heard very little as to how it was received.

**LONGSTREET:** That had some contentious Q&A's where people were pissed off. That movie's a challenge, there is no hand holding, it's almost as bizarre as if it was a museum installation.

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Calvin Reeder is somebody special.

**FANG:** You were all over Sundance this year, also playing in last month's acclaimed TAKE SHELTER.

**LONGSTREET:** I can say it because I only have a teeny part in that, and I'm not a producer or anything, that movie is a masterpiece. I've never had that experience. I was sitting in that movie, literally balling, like I'd run through my tissue and then I saw myself and I snapped out of it. I just couldn't believe that there I was in the middle of this grand movie acting with Michael Shannon. It just blew my mind. For me, it was like watching a cross between TERMS OF ENDEARMENT and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, and then all of a sudden seeing your face show up in it. It was just really bizarre. That movie's brilliant.

**FANG:** You were a producer on CATECHISM and SEPTIEN, correct? Is that something where you enjoy being a part of the films wholesale?

**LONGSTREET:** I do, I've done it before. I love the control that you get when you're an executive producer or something like that. Not control, but I guess involvement, like you're entitled to be involved instead of just being this pesky actor going, "Can I see the cut?" I did it because I wanted to support these little things that I felt were going to have a lot of trouble getting money. CATECHISM, I never meant to be in, I just wanted to see the next Todd Rohal movie, and then an actor dropped out and I got to be in it.

**FANG:** You have an amazing team behind it, with Steve Little, David Gordon Green and Jody Hill.

**LONGSTREET:** All guys that I'm fans of, so to my see my name to come up as executive producer after Danny McBride and Jody Hill and David, it just blows my mind. And Todd is someone I've been chasing for years.

**FANG:** It's great to see them shepherding weird, dark things.

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**LONGSTREET:** I love it, and it's super generous of them because it's Roughhouse's first movie coming out. They're hands-off and them lending their names and support to this is invaluable. They're really incredible for doing that.

**FANG:** Do you have directorial aspirations in addition to all this?

**LONGSTREET:** I don't, I think I'd be a prick. When I made super 8 movies when I was little, I'd get my friends to act in them and I literally threw a spade at somebody's head once, so I was a douche and I would go home and my mom would, of course, have to drive us to wherever we were shooting—in some graveyard—and my mother was like, "You were really not very nice to your friends, Robert." So I don't think I have the patience for it and I'm amazed when the shit is hitting the fan and you've got no time and the sun is going down, and a director can just come up and put his hand your shoulder and calmly say, "What are you thinking for this scene?" I would be a nervous wreck. So I'm just better acting and producing.

THE CATECHISM CATAclySM opens today at New York's IFC Center. For more, head right [here](#), and check out the trailer below.

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