



IT TAKES FROM WITHIN



Written and Directed by Lee Eubanks

2014/ USA/ English

95 min/ HD/ B&W/ 2.40 Scope/ 5.1 Surround

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A Morke Films Production



SHORT SYNOPSIS

An ominous and bleak atmosphere permeates a desolate town as an unnamed man and woman make preparations to attend a burial. The two begin to experience disturbing, surreal incidents involving manifestations of dread and despair while the interment draws near. Abstract dream-like sequences comprise the film, along with expressive cinematography, abrasive sound design, and minimal use of spoken dialogue. Inspired by arthouse films of the 1960s, *It Takes from Within* is the debut feature film from writer/director Lee Eubanks.

SYNOPSIS/REVIEW

Writer/director Lee Eubanks creates a surreal world of dread, isolation, and unease in his feature film debut *It Takes from Within*. The film follows a man and woman as they desperately trudge through a desolate, gray landscape on their way to attend a funeral. *It Takes from Within* serves as a cinematic examination of our fears and anxieties regarding the human condition in conflict with the crisis of death.

Rather than employ a conventional narrative structure, *It Takes from Within* is largely comprised of abstract, introspective scenes experienced from the point of view of the two unnamed leads (no names are provided for any cast member in the film). Nightmarish characters, environments, and scenes exude mood and atmosphere filled with loss, fear, and desolation. Eubanks takes advantage of avant-garde filmmaking techniques, conceptual imagery, and experimental sound design in order to deliver the film's themes.

The film opens with a seemingly detached scene involving the entire cast, featuring a brooding score without any spoken dialogue. The scene moves through several surreal images- a harsh spotlight of grass in the middle of a dark void, a young woman crawling on the ground while screaming and crying, and a bed where an elderly couple are violently tucked in and forcefully put to sleep. After this bizarre prelude the film floats between scenes, following the two leads (actor James Feagin and actress Kristin Duarte) as they each separately explore their deserted, harrowing surroundings in search of the funeral they are scheduled to attend.

While dialogue is infrequent, Eubanks cares to use the dialogue as yet another device to deliver mood rather than plot. Characters often communicate through cryptic and emotionally reserved words, lost and isolated even when speaking to each other. After a scene involving a poetic soliloquy delivered in solitude, the film continues without a word spoken for nearly thirty-five minutes. Characters and scenes develop in abstract, nonsensical, and dreamlike manners. A man drinks soiled water from a birdbath, a sexual fantasy turns into a failed dissociative daydream, a young couple comically fail to communicate with each other, a flower arrangement bursts into

flames on an unending stretch of highway, copious amounts of a strange black liquid spread and stain bed sheets during an intimate encounter, all while the two main characters continue to be followed and haunted by visions of an older man and woman. This all leads to a final scene set on an abandoned beach where the film's focus shifts to a young girl. Embodying a sense of awareness not found in the two lead characters, the young girl closes the film on a collection of unresolved images, menacing sounds, and unending darkness.

It Takes from Within's minimalist aesthetics are simultaneously layered with detail and attention, apparent in the black-and-white compositions from cinematographer Jason Crow. Beautiful and thoughtfully photographed shots include unique landscapes, dim interiors, and a stunning scene set in a noisy cafe filmed entirely in one continuous nine-minute shot.

Artist D.L.E.I.I.'s contributions to the music and sound design create a desolate, yet abrasive sonic environment in the film. Featuring howling wind in nearly every scene, the soundscape directly attacks both the characters in the film and the viewing audience through its increasingly deafening sounds, menacing noises, and textured soundtracks. Cello and violin strings give way to dark drones, dissonant piano melodies, and high-pitched frequencies, building a varied and profound composition inspired by experimental musicianship.

Eubanks' It Takes from Within is tailored for audiences who take pleasure in interpreting a film on their own terms, without distinct or easy-to-follow guidelines. It is a film that provides plenty of abstract material to explore and challenge. For those who are willing to take the dark and sometimes disturbing ride, it is quite a journey to experience.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I finished writing this film's screenplay, I was still without a title. That night I had a dream where I was standing in a dark hallway, screaming into the darkness. I woke up and wrote down the words I had been screaming, which later became the title of this film.

While I've spent years trying to learn how to read and listen to the language of cinema, this feature is my first attempt to speak it. Many influences show themselves through the words I've learned- I repeat them back in my own accent. A love letter to 1960s cinema, the films that have shaped and changed the course of my life. I've selfishly chosen the film's subject matter as a means of personal analysis and therapy. I don't expect to find every answer I was looking for, that isn't the point. I believe filmmaking should be more about exploring (cinematically and philosophically) and possibly finding certain questions that deserve asking. If answers are even possible they can be found in the viewing audience, specific to the individual and waiting to be discovered. Film just brings them to the surface. I hope you enjoy the search as much as I do.

CAST & CREW BIOGRAPHIES

LEE EUBANKS – WRITER/DIRECTOR

Lee Eubanks began his passion for artistic creation with music, learning to play a variety of instruments at an early age. His obsession with movies began in high school upon finding a particular interest in personal films exploring the visual and aural possibilities of cinema. After writing and directing several award-winning short films, Lee focused on completing his debut feature 'It Takes from Within' in 2014.

JAMES FEAGIN - ACTOR

Born in San Antonio, Texas, James Feagin became interested in acting at a young age, attending acting classes and school theater groups during middle school. Through the remainder of his schooling to the years after, James placed a personal hiatus on public acting to focus on the shaping and honing of his craft. Recently, James Feagin has emerged to star in a string of independent, experimental, and surrealist films.

KRISTIN DUARTE - ACTRESS

Kristin Duarte was born in Ventura, California, and raised in the countryside of San Antonio, Texas. She began acting at a young age in small plays among her community and continued to seek other opportunities as time progressed. At 14 years of age, she suffered the devastating and unexpected loss of her older brother and best friend David (17) who was the passenger in an automobile accident. Immediately following the tragic loss, she was determined to fulfill the lifelong mutual dream she shared with her brother to one day become a Movie Star/ Singer. Since then, she has claimed the titles of Miss San Antonio Teen 2002 and Miss Texas Teen International 2003. Kristin was also a Music Protégé under Grammy Award winning Kandi Burruss and was seen on television's The Kandi Factory (BRAVO 2013), releasing a music single about the loss of her brother, "If You Were Here." Kristin is currently working on a musical debut EP and other independent film opportunities.

Q & A WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR LEE EUBANKS

Q) What were the beginning stages of 'It Takes from Within'?

After completing work on a few short films I had written and directed over the years ('OS,' 'A Fold Apart,' 'Voice/Glass'), I felt the need to tell a cinematic story through a longer format. I had been writing down various bits and pieces of ideas for a few years, so I decided to put them all together to look for anything intriguing enough to follow or for any connections between ideas that happened to form. A feature-length screenplay eventually evolved out of these notes along with influence from events in my personal life I had experienced at the time. I'm a big supporter of personal films and the possibility of art acting as therapy, which this film ended up being both. Finally it was just deciding to jump in to this world, along with my cinematographer (Jason Crow), producer (Carlos Silva), and eventually the rest of my crew, and see what happens.

Q) Can you talk about developing the visual style of the film?

My favorite period of filmmaking is 1960s cinema, and the look of this film owes a lot to that timeframe, along with the majority of techniques we used. Grainy black-and-white imagery immediately sets a certain mood and atmosphere that I both enjoy and felt was appropriate for this project. From the time I was taking notes up to the point of drawing storyboards and working with my cinematographer, I couldn't imagine this world in anything other than flatter tones of grey, everything devoid of contrast or life. We also decided to purposefully stay away from handheld camera shots, shallow depth-of-field, and fast cuts. Every shot in the film is on a tripod and many scenes were planned for in the writing stage as being long, single-shot sequences. It was very important for me to develop a visual style that delivered theme and atmosphere on its own, rather than one that did nothing for the theme and relied too much on narrative.

Q) The narrative of the film seems to take a backseat to the more interpretive, oneiric sequences that comprise the film. Was this planned for in the earlier stages of production or did it take place later in editing/post-production?

It was always planned for and seemed to be the only way worth exploring the subject matter. I wanted to quickly set up a basic story with vague character motivations early on, then let the film sort of float through a succession of scenes that develop on their own and lead down roads that might not initially seem like the obvious path to take. These sequences serve the film as its narrative. It also owes a lot to the type of film and art that I enjoy experiencing. The ones that allow room to explore, to question, to apply meaning that can change whenever you come back to them. I'm much more interested in creating an interactive film than a passive film- a movie that draws an individual in, presents them with images and sounds, and makes them develop their own personal response that is quite possibly completely different from someone else who has viewed the same film. While I think it's certainly possible to watch the film in a very literal sense, even as a documentary (this person walked here, said this, etc.), I don't know if that would leave me, as an audience member, with an experience worth remembering. In a way, the film is only as abstract as the viewer takes it. Many symbols in the film are inspired by pieces of art, paintings, poetry, or sculpture that I had personally connected with, but these symbols could easily be interpreted in varying ways by different audience members. I encourage finding new meaning behind them. I think the possibilities offered by cinema can be much more than just talking heads and pages of dialogue spelling out intention, and I've tried to focus more on exploring these visual and aural avenues.

Q) The film's soundtrack stands out in the film, between moments of ear-shattering noise and deafening silence. When did work on sound design begin and how did it shape the film?

Ideas for sound design came with everything else, right at the beginning. It's always been a dream of mine to have ADR dialogue recorded for an entire film and I finally got to realize that dream. This

is another technique commonly used to great effect in older films, with all of the dialogue re-recorded in post-production, and I feel like that decision provides an immensely unique feel. I also wanted to emphasize scenes where the lead characters are completely isolated from the rest of the world, and this was another way to deliver that feeling. You can't hear anything other than their footsteps in a location, maybe their breathing, and even when they speak their words seem disconnected from everything, including themselves! The café scene also had very specific sound design elements, where I wanted to present three different "worlds" and point-of-views occurring at the same time, each with different musical cues and sounds around them. If we're experimenting with visual concepts, why not experiment with sound as well? The sound design of a film is something that I honestly think isn't explored enough in the majority of films and filmmaking I've seen lately, and it can be such a vital part to delivering theme and atmosphere in a film. If a certain scene needs to be violent and abrasive, then the sound for that scene can be screaming right there along with it. I also enjoy listening to many ambient, noise, and experimental musicians, so these elements naturally worked themselves into the film.

Q) Your shooting locations, interiors, and landscapes are visually stunning. Where did production take place?

We shot at practical locations all over Texas, I loved it. I grew up in Texas and spent a lot of time walking, driving, and exploring through huge, Texan fields. An open field represents a lot to me- so much potential, endless possibilities, yet there's an overbearing sense of isolation and emptiness. Perfect for the film.



The Players:

James Feagin

Kristin Duarte

Jesse Ferraro

Elizabeth James

Gabriel Lopez

Nancy McGalliard

David Brownell

Sabra Johnsin

Cinematography by Jason Crow

Original Music and Sound Design by D.L.E.I.I.

Produced by Carlos Silva

Written and Directed by Lee Eubanks