

“PIG HUNT”: Travis Aaron Wade’s Boar War

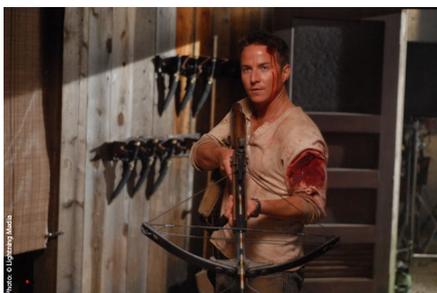
Written by Max Weinstein and Nick Masercola
Friday, 17 September 2010 16:41



To describe the hunt for a vicious 3,000-pound boar as a hallucinatory exploration of man’s primal nature sounds like a bit more than a stretch, if not insanely ambitious. But director Jim Isaac’s PIG HUNT flaunts an array of twists and turns, resulting in a wildly surreal horror/actioner that delivers exactly that.

To its benefit, PIG HUNT’s subtext isn’t too preachy—there’s just as much sex, drugs and nasty, violent encounters with both people and pig as there are allusions to the post-9/11 Afghanistan/Iraq invasion and, as one character says, “the depravities of war.” PIG HUNT is now available as part of the eight-film FANGORIA FrightFest, joining DARK HOUSE, ROAD KILL, THE HAUNTING, FRAGILE, HUNGER, THE TOMB and GRIMM LOVE and available exclusively through Blockbuster stores and Blockbuster By Mail, as well as digitally via Blockbuster on Demand.

PIG HUNT’s ex-military hero, John Hickman, is appropriately played in the film by ex-Marine-turned-thespian Travis Aaron Wade. Exploring those horror/real-world reflections, Fango spoke to Wade about this first leading role, enduring the intensive shoot and the film’s rocky distribution path.



Following a recommendation from friend and PIG HUNT cinematographer Adam Kane (who previously directed him in the short film THE FIX) to FX-artist-turned-filmmaker Isaac (see interview [here](#)), Wade accepted the role instantly after another actor bowed out just before

“PIG HUNT”: Travis Aaron Wade’s Boar War

Written by Max Weinstein and Nick Masercola
Friday, 17 September 2010 16:41

lensing. “THE FIX has been the core of my success thus far,” Wade says. “I can only imagine how tough that decision was, the trust that went into believing I could jump in and play PIG HUNT’s very physical leading role with two days of preparation. When I got the call, I was parked underneath a billboard for HEROES, specifically the episode Adam directed. If that’s not a ‘God-wink,’ I’m not sure what is.”

Wade’s previous acting assignments included a stint in Steven Spielberg’s WAR OF THE WORLDS, an experience he refers to as both “a dream come to life” and the fulfillment of an unexpected full-circle journey that began when his mother, pregnant with Wade, went into labor while watching JAWS in 1975. Isaac’s offer came along not long after Wade lost out on a key role in the war drama JARHEAD. “When PIG HUNT entered my life, it was a difficult time,” Wade reveals. “To have JARHEAD fall through at the last minute was crushing. I was very close to that story. When PIG HUNT arrived, it picked me up and gave me the fire I had lost. And it was Jim Isaac—the man created Gizmo from GREMLINS! I couldn’t wait to see what he had planned for a 3,000-pound boar!”

The trying challenge of leading his supporting band in pursuit of PIG HUNT’s swinish adversary was one Wade was eager to meet. “I was the lead in what had become a \$6-million film,” he notes. “I was well aware of the responsibilities a lead actor carries; I learned that watching Tom Cruise on WAR OF THE WORLDS. Set the tone, keep it positive and professional at all times, keep the drama and BS for your trailer. We became a very close family on location. There’s so much pressure and excitement, it’s like a drug.”

Wade also gives affectionate props to PIG HUNT’s dynamic, established crew. “We had [costumer] Aggie Rodgers [of EMPIRE STRIKES BACK] and [production designer] Geoffrey Kirkland [from CHILDREN OF MEN], and our 2nd unit team had worked on the BOURNE films. We had three Oscar-winning crewmembers on our little film. Having the wardrobe designer who outfitted Han Solo putting the same clothes on your back? Kinda makes ya feel like a movie star, regardless of the size of the film.”

The animalistic qualities Wade brings to Hickman amidst PIG HUNT’s Nor-Cal bayou locales cut through the film’s gritty, grimy exposition, but this raw physicality didn’t come without being fueled by a few real-life scares. “Many scenes were difficult to shoot, for several reasons,” he says. “The sequences in the big wallow—we filmed there for about a week and it was nothing but mud; technically, it was a nightmare. For me, it was a period where I thought I was going to break down. My fiancée and her best friend were living at our home while I was away, and there was a break-in. I got a phone call from the FBI—yes, the FBI—and the man who had broken in was a known serial killer/rapist.”

“PIG HUNT”: Travis Aaron Wade’s Boar War

Written by Max Weinstein and Nick Masercola
Friday, 17 September 2010 16:41

As if that didn’t stand as a horror film on its own, Wade adds, “Our friend had left the bathroom window open while she was taking a shower. The man snuck in the window and assaulted her while she was about to go to sleep. We’re very lucky she was able to defend herself; she kicked him where it counted and knocked the knife out of his hand, and he ran out and escaped. During production, I understood that I couldn’t go back home, but it really messed with my head. I couldn’t focus in those scenes for a few days. I was troubled, to say the least.”

True frights behind him, Wade fell back on his time spent in the military for support and trudged on, summoning an air of frantic energy he regards as both exhaustive and humbling. “After shooting PIG HUNT, all I can say is there should be a category for ‘Best Actor/Actress in an Action Film,’ ” he says. “I have so much respect for guys like Bruce Willis, Harrison Ford, Sylvester Stallone, to be able to look out of breath but not breathe too heavy, to be terrified but stay cool. There’s no way to teach it.”

Wade extends this praise to his own PIG HUNT leading lady. “Tina Huang is one hell of an action star,” he says. “She truly impressed me on set with her ability to hang with the boys.” From a tested weapons expert, this comes as high praise.

Having come through its tough production, PIG HUNT—completed in 2008—hit a wall in its fledgling efforts at distribution. “It was heartbreaking,” Wade says. “We had such a tremendous response from the people who had seen this film. Everywhere we premiered it, from Montreal [at Fantasia] to [the Fango-sponsored LA premiere at] the Egyptian Theater, audiences have been ecstatic. Everyone in this film earned their role and believed in what we were doing. It’s something that should be played out to audiences on the big screen and seen throughout the world. I still believe that 10, 15 years ago, it would have. [When we signed on,] nothing was offered or negotiated because of money or ego. It was beautiful, the making of a film for the true passion of filmmaking.”

With PIG HUNT currently burning up the DVD rental charts, Wade looks toward endeavors both on and off the screen. Now teaching in Vietnam, the actor is eager to engage in such work, which keeps him grounded in between film projects. “It’s such a blessing being able to break away from Hollywood,” Wade says. “I’m not sure who learns more—they or I.”

Wade has also begun the final shooting phase of the upcoming WRECKAGE, alongside recent

“PIG HUNT”: Travis Aaron Wade’s Boar War

Written by Max Weinstein and Nick Masercola
Friday, 17 September 2010 16:41

BREAKING BAD Emmy winner Aaron Paul and writer David Frigerio. Add to that his promise of an invention “in the candle world that will reshape the entire industry and save lives,” through his company Sin Cera, plus a T-shirt line for the [Arm the Animals](#) organization, and it’s apparent this actor’s versatility allows him to burn his own proverbial candle at both ends. “I play a pig hunter in PIG HUNT, but I haven’t picked up a weapon since ’98, when I got out of the Marines,” he reveals. “I’m a huge animal lover.”

{comments on}