

Filmmaker to Come to Godfrey with Apocalyptic Story Starring "The Walking Dead" Cast Member

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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WHITNEY WEGMAN-WOOD

COOPER ANDREWS

THE LAST BUTTERFLIES

HEARTLAND FILMS AND BARNACLE AND SPOON PRODUCTIONS
STARRING WHITNEY WEGMAN-WOOD • COOPER ANDREWS • MERRICK MCCARTHA • ADAM BOYER
AMBER GRAYSON AND INTRODUCING IVY HICKMAN
CINEMATOGRAPHER TAYLOR SNYDER MUSIC BY BEN ADAMS • BOBBY BRADER
WRITTEN BY WHITNEY WEGMAN-WOOD • EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SUSAN VICORY • DIRECTOR PATRICK REA

GODFREY - Filmmaker Whitney Wegman-Wood will come to Godfrey to show her film “The Last Butterflies,” starring Cooper Andrews, at the Always Late TV Movie Awards at Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC).

On March 23 and 24, 2024, the free film festival invites community members to enjoy several short films at LCCC’s Godfrey campus. Wegman-Wood explained that she is excited to return to the Midwest for the film festival and the chance to share her apocalyptic story with a Godfrey audience.

“The Midwest and my home will always be my inspiration,” Wegman-Wood said. “That’s where the stories come from, the heartland. So I’m very happy that I’m going back. It kind of warms my heart.”

“The Last Butterflies,” which stars Cooper Andrews of “The Walking Dead” fame, tells the story of an apocalyptic world based on a series of nightmares that Wegman-Wood had in 2019. She wrote the majority of the script in one night so that she could “get it out of system and get some sleep.”

But three years later, the story and its environmental themes still weighed on her. In 2022, Wegman-Wood decided to turn it into a short film.

The process wasn’t easy. Wegman-Wood had never produced before, and she found it overwhelming at first. She reconnected with an old mentor, Sue Vicory, over ice cream, and Vicory agreed to executive produce the film.

Wegman-Wood was thrilled when Andrews signed on as a main actor. She met Andrews when he was a boom mic operator before he took on the role of Jerry on “The Walking Dead,” and it was a great experience for both actors to work together again.

“This just goes to show you, the people you meet along the way in your journey as an actor and a creative, they’re the ones that you will rely on and create with as it goes on,” Wegman-Wood reflected. “Everyone who was involved with this, they were either passionate about it, or they saw how passionate I was and were like, ‘I want to help make this because clearly, it’s something that you’re excited about.’ Having a lot of conviction in the story that you want to tell definitely helps attract the right people to the project.”

With the team ready to go, “The Last Butterflies” began filming in Kansas and Missouri in late 2022. Wegman-Wood is from Missouri, and she noted that it was nice to come home and create the film in the Midwest. She is excited to return in March for the film festival, where she can share the movie with a Midwestern audience.

Since the film's completion in June 2023, it has been met with positive reviews from critics and audiences. Wegman-Wood said many people have a "visceral" reaction to the ending, and she has been pleased to see that most audiences are as disturbed by the story as she was when she wrote it. She hopes this encourages people to make changes so the environmental issues that "The Last Butterflies" addresses never come to pass in real life.

"I really am glad that it's resonated with people and I hope that it spurs on more action," she said. "My hope is that it doesn't just sit with them as a piece of art, but it actually sits with them as, like, 'Hey, yes, this is a slightly futuristic sci-fi story, but see these things going on in our own world? Maybe we can change it so this isn't the world we end up with.' The world that we have in 'The Last Butterflies' should always be fiction."

A few people have even approached Wegman-Wood about making "The Last Butterflies" into a feature film or TV series, and she is eager to explore this after the film completes its festival run.

"That would also be really exciting because that allows me to connect with even more audiences if we can find a place to share and distribute the story," she added. "Which, you know, that's all that a filmmaker wants, is to share stories."

Wegman-Wood will share "The Last Butterflies" at the Always Late TV Movie Awards in Godfrey at 9:30 a.m. on March 23, 2024. You can check out TheLastButterflies.com for more information about the film and where to view it, or follow Wegman-Wood at WhitneyWegmanWood.com.