



# VIEWS

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*Solitude:*

DAVID RAIZOR

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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The second collaboration between director Joshua Morgan and actor David Raizor in *Blake Buried A Body* marks a profound evolution of the creative shorthand they established in *Children of the Pines*. In portraying Paul Lightwood, Raizor fearlessly navigates the harrowing boundary between cognitive decline and religious fervor, transforming a man's fading memories into haunting myth. Their partnership transcends traditional performance, rooted in a rare, soulful intimacy that allows them to explore the "peculiar darkness" of Florida's landscape and the shadows of the human psyche.

CREDITS. Talent. David Raizor - Photography. x - Interview. Vanesa Miraglia  
THANKS. Lucas A. Ferrara & Joshua Morgan.



David, there is a certain "creative solitude" that actors often face, but when you return to a director like Josh for a second feature, that solitude becomes a shared space. How has the silence between "Action" and "Cut" changed between *Children of the Pines* and *Blake Buried a Body*? Does he still have to ask things of you, or is there a shared frequency now?

On *Children of the Pines* it was the first time I worked with Josh so I didn't know his style of directing. Some directors are very hands on telling you up front what they expect from the character. Before filming begin, Josh and I had conversations of who my character was and what drove him. When we started filming I waited to see what Josh had in mind for the scene we were filming so I waited to see his ideas. That worked well as Josh gave me his vision of what the scene demanded from the character. Such as, what was driving him and the emotion he was feeling at the moment about himself and his feelings towards the others he was interacting with in the scene.

When I portray a character I build a back story of the character, his likes, dislikes and what the character wants. His want from different people is important. For instance, he may want someone to fear him. Another, he may want them to respect or love him. He could want to intimidate the other person. There is also an overall want from the scene and even greater want for the entire film.

On *Blake Buried a Body* Josh let me give my take on the scene and if he wanted it refined or didn't go in the direction he wanted we discussed how to proceed.

However, overall on *BBAB* I feel Josh and I were in sync as he didn't do a lot of redirecting. So I believe we are improving on our shared frequency. That is not an instant thing but rather a building of trust between director and actor and insight of the director's vision and the actor's portrayal of the character.

Paul is a man trapped between the crumbling walls of a tourist trap and the crumbling walls of his own mind. Dementia is often played as a disappearance, but you play it as an arrival—of delusions, of a warped kind of holiness. How do you protect your own spirit when you have to inhabit a mind that is constantly rewriting its own reality?

My answer to this question might not be the most politically correct answer. But the truth is my spirit is never threatened by outside forces. I am firm in my belief of God and His Grace.

I have played characters based on real people that were extremely toxic to everyone around them as well as very bad people. Having said that it does not affect my spirit that does not mean it does not affect my attitude. I once played a role that was based on what the man actually did. We filmed in the house where these events took place. We filmed four weeks straight, twelve hours a day and close to the end of filming I realized I was becoming a jerk to the crew I was working with. I began taking on some of the man's traits. When I recognized what I was doing I went and apologized to the crew and changed my attitude.

When I play really dark characters I have no fear that I will become them. What sometimes hangs with me after "Cut" is called are the emotions of the character. One of the hardest emotions is digging deep to play that sense of loss. That one is hard to just shake off and / or redo another take of it. Those takes play out as they do and if the director wants a retake "just like that one again". That is sometimes really hard to hit it again.

**The relationship between Paul and Blake is heart-breakingly toxic; you are essentially carving a monster out of a boy using the tools of faith. Did you find yourself looking at your own legacy while filming? What part of David did you have to keep hid-**

**den so that Paul could "corrupt" Blake so convincingly?**

We all have things best kept buried. I have my own share of things that have happened to me over the years. Those things that happen can be used as teaching tools for us as actors and even tools for life. I can recall those things that happened to me and use them against others while playing a character. I did live with a lot of anger over being used and manipulated. However, I found Grace with God and was able to forgive those people and also forgive myself. But I still remember what happened so I can use that in my craft.

**Lightwood Groves feels like a character itself—it's rundown, sun-bleached, and heavy. How did the physical decay of that roadside setting inform the way you moved as Paul? Did the humidity of the location seep into the way you delivered his religious "truths"?**

When we are "on stage" we have scene partners and one of them is always the physical environment we are in. To ignore that is to ignore a partner. So the location, weather, time of day, props and surroundings all play a role in how a character reacts. The same way a live scene partner affects the way your character response.

**I've had the privilege of seeing the rough cut—the raw, unmixed bones of the story. There is a terrifying vulnerability in seeing a performance before the music and the color grading "protect" it. When you look at your work in its most naked state, what is the one thing you see in Paul that you didn't realize you had put there?**

I am afraid I must plead the 5th as I have not seen any of the footage. Since I have not seen it I cannot answer what I didn't realize I put in Paul. I do put into characters a lot of feelings towards my scene partners. That could be hate, envy, distrust, love, jealousy basically any and all human emotions based on what I want from them, as well as what I want from my physical environment.

**Josh seems to ask you to go to the "basement" of human experience—the places we usually keep locked. What is the most difficult thing he asked of you in this film, not as an actor, but as a human being? And why did you say yes?**

The emotions he asked of me were nothing out of the ordinary from what I have been asked by other directors. Some of the most difficult things that have been asked are the physical requirements needed for some of the scenes. Such as laying in the cold sand for twenty to thirty minutes during an overnight shoot with the temperature in the 50's. It might not have been much 40 or 50 years ago but I'm a bit older now. The reason I said yes was I believe if you take a job - then you do the job! Plus, I want to do what I can to help achieve the Director's vision.

**When a project like Blake Buried a Body wraps, and you leave the groves behind, does Paul Lightwood leave you? Or is there a specific shadow of his "religious delusions" that you find yourself still carrying in the quiet moments?**

No when the film wraps I do not carry away anything from the characters with me for reasons I have mentioned. I do miss the crew, my fellow actors, the experience, working with the director. I love bringing characters to life it is a great joy for me. I also love working with people who have such a passion for what they do. It is so much better than going into a job where everyone hates to be there. The filming experience is one where the people involved generally love what they do and do things sometimes for little to no pay just for the joy of creating.

**To close, David, I want to talk about the courage found in the quiet. In a career that often demands a polished mask, you've chosen to show us the fractures—especially as Paul, a man coming undone in that heavy Florida heat.**





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Looking back, was there a moment of profound uncertainty where you had to find a bravery that surprised you? A time you nearly walked away from the instability of this life, but chose instead to step deeper into the shadows of a character?

Jobs are unstable, income is unstable but my passion and love of this craft has never been unstable. Of course like all actors I love the applause, the accolades, the recognition for my accomplishments. Having said that I did from the late 80s until the early 2000s I did walk away to earn a living but not from entertaining. During that time I trained as a local clown, taught local clown school, did magic shows and even trained for improv. I was able to go to a clown school where I got to work with some of the great Ringling Brother's clowns. Dur-

ing this time I traveled around the state doing live shows. Clown shows, magic shows, improv shows, murder mystery shows well over 500 shows. I got to do all of these things in addition to working to earn a living. But when I began full time acting for the screen I left all the others behind. I am still open to performing on stage and still do from time to time.

One of the greatest encouragements to keep going was when my wife saw the film where I played a character based on a real person and a real event. After she saw the movie at the premier she said “When I watch the movie I don't see David up there. All I see is the character.”

That is what I am after not to see me but rather who I am playing.

**"BLAKE BURIED A BODY"**

Scheduled to screen at film festivals worldwide soon.





A photograph of a person with curly blonde hair, seen from behind, looking towards a gravestone in a cemetery. The gravestone is dark and has some text on it, though it's not clearly legible. The background is a grassy area with other graves visible in the distance.

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