

VIP TIES

Louis James.

Photo by Violette Sivyer

Credits.

Talent. **Louis James**
Interview. **Vanesa Miraglia**
Photography. **Violette Sivyer &**
Howard J Ford

With Thanks to.

Lucas A. Ferrara

Editorial.

Founder / Editor-in-Chief
Vanesa Miraglia

Get in touch with us.

van@viewties.co.uk



VIEWS TIES

- MAGAZINE -



LOUIS *James*

When it comes to horror, Louis James is carving out a legacy both in front of and behind the camera. Whether he's embodying complex characters, diving into the chaos of producing, or stepping into the director's chair, Louis approaches his work with an intensity that's impossible to ignore. With roles spanning the terrifying "Manor of Darkness," the jungle-set thriller "River of Blood," and indie projects like "Archie," Louis' career is as dynamic as it is impressive. We sat down with him to talk about his craft, his fearless approach to storytelling, and what keeps him coming back to the genre that lives on the edge of fear and imagination.



V: Manor of Darkness plunges into some truly chilling themes. Can you share your process for preparing for a character like Chris? What techniques do you rely on to fully embody such a complex role?

L: It surely does! To be honest with you it's the scary films that you have the most laughs on! Usually I will become familiar with the dialogue but not too familiar to allow for some freedom on the shoot days. Sometimes as an actor you can prepare too well and become unflexible in your performance. I always ask the director how they envisioned the character and how they fit into the larger narrative. A lot of actors get caught up in their own interpretation of the character and forget that a larger narrative is at hand. I'm not saying an actor shouldn't build his own character and stand by his own creation, quite the opposite, just make sure there is some room for play. Fortunately there wasn't room for this to happen on Manor of Darkness as half of my brain was always solving producer problems. Those that become 'stars' can get away with doing what they want, a star becomes bigger than the role and the public fall in love with them.. think John Wayne, Clark Gable, Tom Cruise. The beauty of working with the same director across a few films is a kind of 'cheat code' as they start to write to your strengths and see you in a role before you've even heard about it! As a producer I've seen how the power of good casting solves a lot of problems for both the director and actor.

V: Every transformation comes with its challenges. What was the toughest part of preparing for Chris, and how did you push through it? Were there any unexpected hurdles during filming?

L: I can't fully describe the scene without giving away a spoiler however I will say there is a moment where I had to allow myself to be truly present and vulnerable emotionally. It's worth noting that when tackling such a scene an actor always remains professionally emotional never wrecklessly emotional. If you start to believe you're the character it's time to step back before they call the psychiatric ward.

V: Playing a character can often uncover personal insights. Did stepping into Chris' shoes influence the way you think about fear, darkness, or even your own life? Were there any surprising parallels between his journey and your own?

L: We all find ourselves in circumstances where we set out with good intentions on a road which is morally questionable. There have been times in my life where I have considered a risky undertaking with the intention of helping those I love. It's always worth remembering our loved ones would much prefer for us to be safe and alive than a hero who's injured or worse. Then again we'd have no heroes unless people were willing to take risks for the greater good of all!

Playing characters that are flawed definitely gives you a chance to analyse what the right choice would be. We're fortunate as actors to get to be able to pretend and play out so many fabricated scenarios.

V: Horror requires actors to dive deep into intense emotions. How do you mentally prepare for scenes that demand raw fear or overwhelming anxiety? Do you have any pre-scene rituals that help you lock into that headspace?

L: In all honesty all the preparation is done before the moment the camera rolls on set. Truth in acting is truth in circumstances as Uta Hagen once said. I do all of the work before hand so I can be truly present and see where the scene takes me. Good directors will guide you gently in the right direction if you veer too much off piste.

When I'm on a movie set, and off it, I treat myself like an athlete. Optimal sleep, diet and exercise keeps you sharp so you can stay ahead of a demanding schedule.

V: Collaboration is at the heart of filmmaking. How do you work with directors and fellow actors to elevate your performance? Was there a specific moment on Manor of Darkness where teamwork truly transformed a scene?

L: I really believe it comes down to professionalism, good man-

ners and kindness. Shoot days can be relentlessly long, it's usually in the 11th hour of the shoot day where cast and crew have to pull one another through.

Blake Ridder, the writer/director and Lucas A Ferrara, the producer, have a lot of discussion during pre production and a lot more through post production. Always being open to ideas and finding a middle ground can be the make or break of a good movie edit.

Performance wise I always give my fellow actors space and time (if it's permitted) to explore what they are trying to do. Unlike being on stage a movie scene is shaped in the edit room. What may seem odd in the moment often comes off like a masterful stroke of acting genius in the final edit.

V: In addition to acting, you've taken on the roles of writer, producer, and director with projects like 'Archie.' How has wearing so many hats shaped your approach to acting? Does working behind the camera give you a fresh perspective when stepping into a role?

L: It's completely changed my life and my journey as an actor. It's a highly competitive business and nobody owes you anything. As soon as you understand that you can get to work and build the future you want.

In this day and age you have to create. I know many actors who say they are 'creatives' or 'artists' but never create a thing!

I decided to write Archie as a challenge to myself. It's only in attempting something that you truly start to understand it. I have been to the film markets over the last few years and heard what sales agents and distributors are after in a movie. I thought I would start to write and direct so I can eventually have my own pictures greenlit.

Fortunately Lucas and I have a great relationship, he's always been a very supportive patron and producer. We have become good friends. He allowed me to give it a shot at shooting my own script. It has been a priceless experience.

I believe every actor should write, produce and direct some-

thing.. even if it's a 5 minute movie shot on an iPhone. As actors we are like the hands on a watch so why not take a watch apart and try and put it back together again!

As an actor it's also beneficial to have some control over the direction you want to go. You can't wait on the phone to ring - you've got to get out there and do it! The legendary Howard J Ford taught me this. I have been fortunate enough to work on 3 epic movies with him so far, 'Escape' 'River of Blood' and 'Bone Keeper' which stars John Rhys Davies (Lord of The Rings/ Indiana Jones)

V: With the variety of roles you've taken on, are there specific genres or character types you're dying to explore next? How do you see your craft evolving as you dive into new challenges?

L: It's important to set ever expanding goals, master new skills and find fresher ways to entertain! I would like to rise up to the level of action movie star - like Sylvester Stallone and Tom Cruise in the Mission impossible series. I am currently developing an action adventure franchise with my wife Sarah Alexandra Marks.

Theo craft of acting is very important however it's one of several components of what I'm trying to achieve in the movie business. I could happily work on my interpretation and portrayal of Hamlet in my spare time however rising up the movie industry requires a relentless work ethic across a myriad of areas.

I've always been into physical challenges, whether they be dancing, gymnastics, weightlifting, athletics etc. They are tremendously helpful when it comes to performing my own stunts and working with fight choreographers - something I would like to do a lot more of.

V: As actors, we all have that moment when everything "clicks." Was there a specific event, either during training or practice, where you thought, "This is when I truly feel like an actor"? Or do you think being an actor is less about epiphanies and more of an innate calling?

L: I have several moments that come to mind, I'm still hav-



“

In this day and age you have to create. I know many actors who say they are ‘creatives’ or ‘artists’ but never create a thing!

”



“

Ironically the hardest moments have given me the sweetest memories... so I hope there is more hardship to come.

”

ing those moments and they feel incredible. Especially when they strike you out of the blue. Whenever they come I try to take a moment to myself and thank God for the blessings he's poured upon my life. Not just for the direction my career is going but for my family, friends, health and freedom.

Here are some moments as an actor/producer (and now director) that come to mind as 'pinch me' moments. Blake Ridder and I watching the success of the short film 'The English Teacher' skyrocket on YouTube. Being on set of 'Help' our first feature together, greenlit by Lucas, and relishing in the buzz of having a wonderful crew and cast around us on location in Somerset. Running across the canyons of Fuerteventura playing 'Jude' in Escape. Watching the talented Thai crew light the jungle as Howard J Ford directed me in 'River of Blood.' Directing the first scene of my screenplay 'Archie'.

Working closely with Howard J Ford and John Rhys Davies on location in Wales on Bone Keeper.

Sitting in screening rooms alongside my parents and letting them see my work.

V: Acting is an act of courage, and your career is a testament to that. Whether it's facing industry challenges, creating your own films, or stepping into demanding roles, you've em-

braced a fearless approach. Can you share a moment where you had to summon your deepest courage? Was it a particular scene, a decision to pursue your passion, or maybe both?

That's very kind of you to say. There are men and women all over the world who wake up every day and drag themselves through backbreaking jobs to support their families. It takes courage to do that. As it does to be on the frontline in combat. My parents were courageous in the way they raised my sisters and I.

There have been moments that have been harder than others. If an actor prepares properly, learns his lines and listens to the directors vision there isn't much more to it.

I can recall many weeks where Blake Ridder and I would work 24/7 to plan and shoot movies. Moments where we had to walk into suites in Cannes and pitch ourselves. Moments we had to convince others of our goals. Ironically the hardest moments have given me the sweetest memories.. so I hope there is more hardship to come.

Howard J Ford and I had some pretty tough logistical challenges shooting in the caves and forests at night but we always found a way to enjoy ourselves. You could wake Howard any hour of the night and give him a camera and he'd find a way to be positive about it.



VIEWS

DIGITAL MAGAZINE