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Linda Hamilton stars in 'Easy Does It' with two local filmmakers

BY SUE STRACHAN | STAFF WRITER OCT 14, 2019 - 4:00 PM

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Will Addison (center) and Ben Matheny (right) confer during the shoot of "Easy Does It." Addison is a co-producer, director and co-writer of the film with Matheny, who in addition to his role as Jack Buckner, is a co-producer and co-writer.

Photo by Ben Samuels/Courtesy of EFI Productions

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Director James Cameron's 1984 blockbuster, "The Terminator" — starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as a cyborg assassin and Linda Hamilton as Sarah Connor, the woman he's aiming to kill — earned more than \$78.3 million worldwide at the box office.

Hamilton will be back as the iconic Sarah Connor when "Terminator: Dark Fate" opens in theaters Nov. 1. But before that, she will be playing a far different character, the crime matriarch named King George, in "Easy Does It," a darkly comic, '70s-styled road trip movie that premieres Friday (Oct. 18) at the New Orleans Film Festival.

New Orleans filmmakers Will Addison and Ben Matheny, both 30 years old, knew they were going after a big star when they reached out to Hamilton, trying to interest her in taking on the role of King George in their film. And their proposal hit at just at the right time for Hamilton.

"I loved the script, and it was a far cry from what I was going to do, 'the big job,'" she said, referring to the newest release in the *Terminator* franchise.

“Easy Does It” is about two small-town best friends who go on a cross-country trip to hunt for hidden loot. Broke, they end up robbing their way across the southwest, bringing along a hostage, followed by cops and King George in hot pursuit.

Hamilton was “on our dream list of actors and actresses,” Addison said. The King George role had been written for a man, but the filmmakers realized they should open it up to either gender.

“We didn’t think it was possible,” Addison said of Hamilton taking the role. “Then we found out she lived here.” Hamilton moved to New Orleans a few years ago, living a quiet life and taking roles that interested her.

Such as King George.

“It was like a breath of fresh air while I was fully immersed in the darkness of Sarah Connor. I needed it,” said Hamilton.

“And when I’m in, I’m all in. I had so much fun playing King George that I gave them some of their money back, because I wanted them to know how much fun I had.”

Addison and Matheny met at the University of New Orleans film program. Addison, who arrived in New Orleans “from the middle of the cornfields” in Charleston, Ill., said he had “always been obsessed with sci-fi blockbuster movies.”

In high school, he discovered the films of Wes Anderson and other directors who explored quirky, flawed characters, and started pursuing filmmaking, creating Monty Python sketch videos with friends.

At UNO, Addison, also director of “Easy Does It,” was making a sci-fi travel short film, “A Matter of Time” and cast Matheny, who arrived in the Crescent City from Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He, too, started making films when he was younger, inspired by the videos he watched because his mother didn't let him watch TV.

At UNO, they became part of a film club, UNO Filmworks, and kept on making short films.

After graduating in 2011, Addison and Matheny founded EFI (Elysian Fields Independent) Productions with other friends from UNO,

while taking various production and acting jobs. In their free time, they would make short movies and music videos.

It was during this period that “Easy Does It” had its genesis. They made a short, then developed the script into a feature-length film.

Joining forces with another UNO alumni filmmaking company called Worklight Pictures, they started showing the short to raise money, initially raising \$25,000 “by the skin of our teeth, asking the community, family and friends,” said Matheny, who along with being a co-writer of the movie with Addison, portrays Jack Buckner, one of the two main characters. His other half is Scottie Aldo, played by fellow UNO alum Matthew Paul Martinez.

Other actors who came on early included New Orleanians Bryan Batt as Officer Owens and Dwight Henry as Chief Parker. Later on, fellow city residents John Goodman and Harry Shearer joined the cast in voice roles.

Once the movie had the initial funding and most of the cast, “It made a huge difference,” said Matheny. “A lot more doors opened and enabled us to meet other investors.”

Filming took place in New Orleans as well as Mississippi and Texas. The filmmakers are keeping Hamilton's transformation into King George under wraps until the movie debuts.

“It was awesome to be able to film most of the movie here, as it was such a big part of our lives,” said Matheny. “Ninety percent of the crew went to UNO.” And, the enthusiasm from everyone from “our mechanic in Mid-City to restaurants giving us free catering,” was phenomenal, he said.

“I’m a great supporter of new talent and felt that I should always allow space in my career to take chances without knowing the outcome,” Hamilton said.

It is this freedom that Hamilton treasures. “I love a small crew that is doing the work of a big crew, and the creativity that is required when there’s no money – it feeds the imagination, the creativity and the art of the project.”

Best of all?

“Ben and Will became instant family and there’s nothing more satisfying than that,” Hamilton said.

Editor's Note: A change to the story was made 10.15.19 listing Alexa Georges as co-executive producer. She is an executive producer.

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