

“Dead End Drive” to World Premiere at 20th Anchorage International Film Festival

Exceptional Performances Highlight Disability Inclusion and Representation in Filmmaking

ANCHORAGE, AK, November 1st, 2020 – *Dead End Drive*, an unconventional horror/thriller, is set to make its world premiere at the 20th Annual Anchorage International Film Festival (AIFF) next month. The logline reads: During the zombie apocalypse, one survivor finds a dead end that will hopefully lead him to salvation. The film not only focuses on the lives of three people surviving against all odds but was created by a cast and crew, a majority of which was comprised of people with disabilities – including cast-members Tobias Forrest and Alaska native Eileen Grubba, who have both experienced spinal cord injuries. Executive produced by David Zimmerman and written by Forrest, the production is directed by Alexander Yellen from *Z Nation* and also stars Austin Basis of *Beauty and the Beast* fame, so it’s guaranteed to be a monster of a short film!



“I always wanted to be in a zombie film so instead of waiting, I just wrote one,” says Forrest, a first-time filmmaker. “Hopefully, it encourages other filmmakers to create and cast more authentic characters without making disability the focal point of the story.” With a track record for excellence in the genre, Yellen, the director of *Dead End Drive*, adds: “This project was an opportunity to take a familiar kind of story in a genre I know well and reimagine it, with a talented cast of characters who typically aren't portrayed in zombie films.” Grubba shares, “There have been times when I’ve been made to believe I was born for this mission: to fight for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the entertainment industry, so that they would be seen and accurately represented in television and film – which would then be a catalyst to change the way the world sees and accepts disability.” Honored to be a part of this year’s AIFF lineup, she continues, “Now we get to screen our disability-inclusive film in the very city I was born in, so it feels like a sign from above. Maybe my parents letting me know: this is the film and this is our time.”

Actress/Producer Grubba was born in Anchorage, the daughter of Allan and Barbara Grubba, who left Alaska when their children were young. Her uncle Albert and son Gregory Grubba had a local dentistry practice; her cousin Judy Grubba (Goldsworthy), who often works as a producer with Eileen, was *Miss Alaska National Teen*; cousin Kathy Grubba is a well-known vocalist in town; and Grubba’s aunt and uncle Larry and Ardelle Osenga owned the popular restaurant *The Garden of Eat’n*, where her cousins worked summer jobs. Several Grubba/Osenga cousins still live and work in Anchorage, so this virtual homecoming will be a celebration for the entire family. Ms. Grubba adds, “I’m so excited to premiere our film at AIFF in my hometown!”

AIFF’s mission is to develop, promote and sustain a film festival that supports new media and independent filmmaking in Alaska and around the world, while enriching cultural and entertainment opportunities for Alaskans. AIFF promotes disability awareness and authentic casting by including a drama like *Dead End Drive* in their festival lineup. By bringing filmmakers from all parts of the country and all walks of life to Alaska, the festival connects artists with people they might not otherwise meet, and engages audiences in workshops, screenings and plenty of celebratory parties. The festival runs from December 4-13. For tickets and screening info, visit the AIFF website: <https://anchoragefilmfestival.org> The filmmakers behind *Dead End Drive* eagerly anticipate their upcoming world premiere in Anchorage, and are looking forward to a successful run deep into the 2021 festival circuit. For more info on the film: <https://www.facebook.com/DeadEndDriveFilm>

Watch the trailer for *Dead End Drive* here: <https://youtu.be/KcWuBP5m1jg>

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About Eileen Grubba:

Eileen Grubba is an award-winning actress, lifetime member of The Actors Studio and member of the Television Academy. Her work can be seen in HBO's *Watchmen*, CBS's *SWAT* and *All Rise*, Netflix's *The Politician*, ABC's *Stumptown*, NBC's *Game of Silence*, FX's *Sons of Anarchy*, and AMC's *Fear the Walking Dead* – along with a slew of other television appearances. Her recent guest starring role on *New Amsterdam* mirrors her own life, and the story of her battle to work in the entertainment industry was written up on the TV Academy website this past summer: <https://www.emmys.com/news/online-originals/member-profile/eileen-grubba>

She has been nominated for multiple Best Actress awards for Indie films, with several wins for Best Ensemble Cast and Female Lead. She was awarded the 2020 WeSpark Award for her social impact in the entertainment industry and won the Mary Austin Excellence in Screenwriting Awards in 2019 and 2020. She has also won many awards for her disability-inclusive short films. Eileen is an advocate for the hiring of performers with disabilities in film, television and advertising; serves on the SAG/AFTRA National PWD Committee; is a Brand Ambassador for Global Disability Inclusion; and was selected for the 2020 CBS Leadership Pipeline for directing. She is a national public speaker for events supporting challenged patients, disability inclusion, eradicating bullying, and empowering women. She was recently featured in Forbes for her advocacy: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/allisonnorlian/2020/08/04/after-battling-decades-of-discrimination-a-disabled-actress-fights-for-future-talent/> Grubba was paralyzed from the waist down as a child after a vaccine attacked her spinal cord leaving her with a C1-C4 spinal cord injury, and later beat cancer. Doctors said she would never walk again, but she regained most of her mobility through relentless persistence and many surgeries. A fighter all her life, Eileen refuses to give up her quest to create equal opportunity for people with disabilities and believes inclusion in entertainment will create a world of greater acceptance for everyone. <https://www.eileengrubba.com>

About Tobias Forrest:

After a C5 spinal cord injury, Tobias Forrest bounced back with a positive attitude and passion to perform. He was featured in the *The 92nd Academy Awards* choir earlier this year, and has guest starred on *How To Get Away With Murder*, along with roles in *Good Trouble*, *Queen Sugar*, *The Sessions*, *Weeds* and more. Forrest can currently be seen playing Mac in the action/comedy *Special Unit* and was a recurring character on CBS's *Wisdom of the Crowd*, which featured his original song "Lizard People." He has starred onstage in the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Cost of Living*, as well as *Colossal*, *Pyretown* and others. In addition, he was the lead singer for the band *Cityzen* and has done audio description for several television shows. He was interviewed about his life, story, career, and process on Thrive Global in September of last year: <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/rising-star-tobias-forrest-film-and-television-are-capable-of-informing-and-educating-the-public-about-diversity-issues-which-can-cause-social-action-and-change/> As an entertainer, Tobias hopes to encourage others to pursue their dreams despite any differences, difficulties or disabilities they may have. See his full filmography here: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2574603>

About Austin Basis:

Born & raised in Brooklyn, NY, Austin Basis is an actor, writer, producer, artist, and celebrity ambassador for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF). Shortly after graduating The Actors Studio Drama School with an MFA in Acting, he became a lifetime member of The Actors Studio. Basis is most known for his role as J.T. Forbes on the 4-time *People's Choice Award*-winning sci-fi drama *Beauty and the Beast*. He also played Math Rogers for two seasons on The CW drama *Life Unexpected* and was a lead in the Warner Bros. web series *GHOSTFACERS*. Austin has appeared on numerous TV shows including: *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *How To Get Away With Murder*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Supernatural*, *Lucifer*, *Casual*, *NCIS*, and *LAW & ORDER: Criminal Intent*, among many others. Most recently, he recurred on *Little Fires Everywhere*, and guest starred in episodes of *Homeland* and *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* His film credits include: *J. Edgar*, *The Other End of the Line*, *My Sassy Girl*, *American Zombie*, *Re-Cut*, *Dorian Blues*, and *Boxboarders!* Austin develops content with his company "Behind the Bag!" Productions. He executive produced the short film *The Fear We Share* – which he wrote and starred in, as well. Together with his writing partners Dave Maulbeck and Josh Taub, he wrote and published a superhero comic book series in 2018 about kids with disabilities and chronic illnesses called *The KINETIX*. In the comics, the superhero character CYABETES is based on his own experience growing up with Type 1 Diabetes. <https://www.austinbasis.com>

About Alexander Yellen:

Alexander Yellen is an experienced director and cinematographer – a veteran of 45 feature films and 60 episodes of television. He has won two Telly Awards for his photography and been a festival finalist for his short film *miles to go*. Traveling extensively with his scientist parents, Alexander was exposed from an early age to a wide range of people and environments. He developed a passion for visual storytelling and has always sought to make those stories accessible through meaningful and unique perspectives. Yellen was born in Washington, DC, earned a degree in film studies from Wesleyan University in Connecticut, and has lived in Los Angeles for the last 15 years. See his full filmography here: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1635438>

About David Zimmerman:

After a mostly uneventful career as a professional musician, David Zimmerman transitioned into theatre in 2005 as a writer in residence at The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute. In 2013, after working on projects with Ed Asner and Mark Rydell, David was accepted into The Actors Studio Playwright/Director’s Unit and subsequently the Playwright/Development Unit. While at The Actors Studio, Zimmerman met Eileen Grubba and they worked together on several projects and presentations, along with actor Carmen Argenziano. David is humbled by the talented artists involved in this project and considers it a privilege to be able to support this wonderful film.



Eileen Grubba – actress / producer



Tobias Forrest – writer / actor / producer



Austin Basis – actor / producer



Official Poster (larger file available)



Alexander Yellen – director / producer

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