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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# AKRON HORROR SHORT *CREAKS* PONDERS THE DARK AND GETS UNDER YOUR SKIN

*Filmmaker Randy Shaffer turns real scientific mysteries, painful personal trauma, and a three-day filmmaking marathon into a 15-minute descent into pure darkness*

**AKRON, OHIO — August 30, 2026** – What if dark matter is not only alive, but what if it's trying to communicate with us?

This question lives at the heart of ***Creaks***, a new 15-minute supernatural suspense and found-footage horror short from writer/director **Randy Shaffer**, acclaimed writer of the bestselling short story, ***The Horror***.

Completed in early August 2026, the film combines real-world scientific mysteries surrounding dark matter with occult horror, expressionistic imagery and a riveting soundscape to explore a simple but unsettling idea: perhaps it isn't the darkness we should fear, but what comes out of it.

In ***Creaks***, internet researcher and occultist YouTuber Martin Bloom investigates an online rumor claiming that dark matter is alive—and that it uses abstract sounds to communicate. His curiosity quickly becomes something more dangerous as seemingly ordinary noises begin suggesting the presence of something beyond human perception.

Soon, Martin discovers that some secrets are best left undisturbed.

## HORROR ROOTED IN REAL SCIENCE

While ***Creaks*** ventures into supernatural territory, Martin's research draws inspiration from actual NASA research and scientific theories surrounding dark matter and dark energy.

Scientists estimate that ordinary matter making up everything humans can directly see—from people and planets to stars and galaxies—accounts for only about 5% of the known universe. The overwhelming majority remains invisible and is described through the still-mysterious phenomena known as dark matter and dark energy.

***Creaks*** takes that scientific uncertainty and asks a decidedly less comforting question:

**What if something is inside that unseen universe, and what if it is aware of us?**

The film serves as a concept short for a potential feature-length story while remaining a completely self-contained experience. It is also the first entry in ***The Split-Level Mysteries***, a planned trilogy of unrelated films shot inside Randy Shaffer and actor/producer Dana Curcio's Akron-area home.

## MICRO BUDGET HORROR MADE IN MICRO TIME

The story behind ***Creaks*** became nearly as intense as the production itself.

Shaffer had originally planned to shoot the film at a relaxed pace in May of 2026. Those plans evaporated when a life-threatening infection sidelined the filmmaker for much of the summer.

After recovering, Shaffer returned to the project with film festival deadlines rapidly approaching.

The result was a micro-budgeted filmmaking sprint. ***Creaks*** was shot, edited, scored, colored and mixed in roughly three days, between August 11 and 13, 2026.

*"Creaks was a blast to make,"* Shaffer says. *"But make no mistake—it was a stressful blast. We had very little finances to make the film because of my illness, but I took that as a fun filmmaking challenge. Can I achieve big budget thrills with something as small as an iPhone?"*

Rather than separating his experience from the film, Shaffer incorporated some of the fear and vulnerability of his illness into the finished story.

The compressed production also reflected one of the things Shaffer loves most about filmmaking: its unpredictability.

*"What was once a casually paced, carefully planned shoot for early summer turned into a serious last-minute crunch,"* he says. *"But that's filmmaking. The unpredictability—and spontaneous genius—of creative storytelling is one of my favorite things about making movies."*

## HORROR YOU CAN FEEL … AND HEAR

Sound is not merely an accompaniment in ***Creaks***. It is part of the threat.

The finished film contains more than **530 unique sound effects, VFX and visual elements**, with ordinary household noises gradually transformed into something far more ominous.

Shaffer composed the film's score himself using sound effects and deliberately out-of-tune instruments. He also taught himself 5.1 surround mixing for the project and completed the mix using his own custom-built prosumer home theater.

The central idea was partly inspired by something much more mundane: Shaffer's own homes.

A furnace in a previous house had a habit of pinging, popping and rattling during moments of strong emotion, including laughter and crying. After moving, Shaffer noticed the wood in his new home producing similarly conspicuous creaks.

Those experiences eventually became the seed for the film's central question: **What if those sounds aren't so random?**

Many of the creaks heard in the finished movie were captured practically during production. Some were unexpected enough to genuinely startle the cast while filming.

Even the movie's ever-present rain functions differently from a conventional storm. It can be heard throughout the film but is never seen, serving instead as an auditory representation of the darkness surrounding Martin.

*“The film’s 5.1 mix is especially effective at conveying the horror of Creaks,”* Shaffer says. *“Being surrounded by literal creaks as darkness floods the screen creates a truly visceral experience. The darker the room, the better!”*

## DARKNESS BY DESIGN

Visually, ***Creaks*** deliberately rejects the neutral appearance associated with much contemporary found-footage horror. Instead, camera angles and colors become increasingly expressionistic, drawing inspiration from filmmakers including **Dario Argento** and **Mario Bava**.

Mysterious red and blue lights appear throughout Martin's home with no identifiable source. At times, they seem to float within the frame. After a pivotal attack in Martin's library, they disappear entirely. Meanwhile, each successive scene featuring Martin becomes darker than the one before it.

Eventually, the filmmaker deliberately introduces artifacting, compression and visual distortion, allowing the image itself to seemingly deteriorate as Martin moves closer to the nightmarish truth of darkness.

To achieve a surreality, the film was photographed on iPhones in native 4K at 30 frames per second without HDR to preserve the appearance of an authentic online video series that would

stream on YouTube or TikTok. A 24fps theatrical version was subsequently created for exhibition.

Shaffer even performed one particularly painful practical effect himself: **he actually fell down the stairs to capture both the image and sound of Martin's fall in-camera.**

*“I was still recovering from my infection and thought, ‘I can’t make it worse, right?,’ so I took the tumble,”* Shaffer says. *“My knees don’t thank me, but the shot looks incredible!”*

## A FILM MADE AT HOME … LITERALLY!

***Creaks*** is a proof-of-concept for a potential feature-length film. And as noted, it is also the first installment in ***The Split-Level Mysteries***, a three-part anthology of unrelated stories produced in Shaffer and Curcio's own home.

*“The split-level design of our house makes for a great visual setting,”* Shaffer says. *“The only real issue is our cats, who have taken to yowling during a hot set.”*

Shaffer filmed all of his performance as Martin Bloom alone during a single night. Producer and actor **Dana Curcio**, who plays the mysterious online figure **"darkmatterconscience237,"** likewise completed her scenes during one night. Her outdoor sequence was photographed in a public parking garage in the Akron region, while the remainder of the production was filmed inside the couple’s home.

The house itself became an essential part of the movie. Many visual and sound effects were created practically, including disappearing horses reflected in a mirror during the film's finale.

One of the library's apparent horrors is considerably less threatening behind the scenes: the figure that spooks Martin is actually a full-sized cardboard **Tom Cruise** standee wearing a vintage ***Scream*** mask that had been turned backward.

Other details contain personal and cinematic Easter eggs.

The "237" in **darkmatterconscience237** pays tribute to Stanley Kubrick's ***The Shining***. The date **August 29** references ***Terminator 2: Judgment Day*** and symbolizes a point of no return. Even Martin Bloom's surname provides a clue: a "bloom" is something capable of growing. Also, Shaffer also features Akron local, acclaimed artist (and longtime friend) Shawn Coss’s bestselling book ***It’s All In Your Head*** during the film’s library scene.

## GHOSTS FROM THE FILMMAKER’S PAST

Some of the most personal sounds in ***Creaks*** come from recordings decades older than the film itself!

Shaffer developed his fascination with movies, acting and audio drama as a child, recording elaborate performances on a brown-and-beige Fisher-Price tape recorder throughout the 1980s and early ‘90s. From approximately ages three through fourteen, he regularly recorded himself performing stories and imaginary movies he hoped to one day make. A sample from those childhood recordings appears in ***Creaks***.

The film also incorporates the voice of Shaffer's late sister, **Kelly Rudin**, sampled from a childhood recording made in 1979, two years before Randy was born. In the recording, she sings the folk campfire tune ***"Smile, Don't You Know God Loves You!"***

The inclusion connects the film's supernatural darkness with themes that have followed Shaffer throughout his creative career: mortality, trauma, grief and dread.

*“It would have blown my sister’s mind that her tape, ‘Making Stick People,’ would factor into my first short film in any reasonable way,”* Shaffer laughs. *“But here we are! She would have been tickled pink by the idea.”*

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## ABOUT RANDY SHAFFER

Randy Shaffer's talents have taken him on a decades-long creative journey spanning screenwriting and filmmaking, film studies and journalism, fiction and nonfiction writing, professional photography, sound design and marketing.

He has worked for IGN, SeaWorld, Six Flags, Cedar Fair, Cutri Photo Arts, and various cannabis marketing initiatives. Shaffer currently owns a freelance marketing and filmmaking business and creates short-form film content for Clorox/Purell social media platforms.

Shaffer is also the author of the acclaimed bestselling short story ***The Horror*** and is currently working on a novelization for a film from international rap sensation, **R.A. the Rugged Man**.

In 2025, Shaffer began work on his first feature-length film, ***Save for Death***, which is currently in post-production and expected to premiere soon. He is currently working on several audio dramas, as well as his next short film, ***Bedridden***.

His work frequently explores trauma, suicide, grief, joy and hope through unusual characters and propulsive genre narratives. Having spent much of his life caring for loved ones facing death, Shaffer has found healing by transforming those experiences into thoughtful, evocative stories and sharing them with audiences.

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## VIEWING *CREAKS*

***Creaks*** is a supernatural horror, suspense and found-footage short film written and directed by Randy Shaffer.

The movie was designed for viewing across formats, including theatrical projection, televisions and mobile devices, and was built for both stereo and 5.1 surround viewing. For its intended presentation, however, Shaffer recommends an OLED or True Black-capable display, a dark room and—for audiences willing to tempt fate—a late-night viewing alone, in pitch black.

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## FILM DETAILS

**Title:** *Creaks*
**Project Type:** Short Film
**Genres:** Suspense / Thriller / Supernatural / Horror / Found Footage
**Runtime:** 15 minutes, 19 seconds
**Completion Date:** August 14, 2026
**Production Budget:** $500
**Country of Origin:** United States
**Filming Location:** United States / Akron, Ohio region
**Language:** English
**Shooting Format:** iPhone / 4K
**Aspect Ratio:** 16:9
**Color:** Color
**Digital Cinema Package:** Available
**First-Time Filmmaker:** No
**Student Project:** No

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## PRINCIPAL CREDITS

**Written and Directed by**
Randy Shaffer

**Produced by**
Randy Shaffer
Dana Curcio

**Executive Producer**
Jake Richardson

**Starring**
Randy Shaffer as **Martin Bloom**
Dana Curcio as **darkmatterconscience237**

**Music**
Randy Shaffer

**Sound Design**
Randy Shaffer

**Sound FX Mixing**
Randy Shaffer

**Visual Effects**
Randy Shaffer

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## CREAKS PRODUCTION NOTES AND TRIVIA

*(contains mild spoilers)*

- ***Creaks*** **is a concept short for a potential feature length film. It was also designed to be a self-contained standalone one-shot, so audiences need no context to enjoy the short.**

- ***Creaks*** **is the first in an un-connected trilogy shot in Randy and Dana's home titled,** ***The Split-Level Mysteries*****.**

- **The research Martin discusses in** ***Creaks*** **is based on real NASA studies, evidence and theories on dark matter and dark energy from leading scientists. 95% of the known universe is literally made of matter we cannot see or perceive.**

- **Shot, edited, scored, colored and mixed in roughly three days, from August 11-13, 2026.** ***Creaks*** **was originally planned to be a casual shoot for early summer that same year, but Shaffer suffered a life-threatening infection that prevented filming for several months resulting in a tremendous crunch to hit film festival deadlines.**

- **Shaffer scored the film on his own using sound fx and out-of-tune instruments. He also self-taught himself 5.1 surround sound mixing. As an avid lover of immersive audio since childhood, he found the experience to be second-nature, not to mention a lot of fun. Shaffer mixed the film in his own prosumer home theater.**

- **In order to feel authentic to the vibe and look of a real YouTube series, the film was shot with iPhone cameras at a native 4K 30fps, without HDR. The film was also converted to 24fps for theatrical exhibition using Topaz Video frame rate conversion software.**

- **Camera angles and coloring are intentionally expressionistic and vibrant, akin to the work of Dario Argento or Mario Bava.**

- **The background lights oscillate between red and blue. They are meant to insinuate a looming threat.**

- **The red and blue lights also have no origin, and even appear to float in certain shots, but intentionally disappear after Martin is attacked in the library.**

- **Each scene with Martin is darker than the previous one, even going so far as to force artifacting, compression and other distortions into the frame in order to disorientate or unnerve the viewer.**

- **Many creaks were achieved in-camera. Many were also quite unexpected, or were actually scary or startling to the cast while filming.**

- **The idea was inspired by a furnace in Shaffer's old home, which would regularly ping, pop or even rattle during big emotions, like laughing or crying. This process would repeat in Shaffer's new home, where wood regularly creaks.**

- **Randy Shaffer shot all of his scenes completely alone, and in one night. Dana Curcio shot all her scenes in one night as well.**

- **Shaffer really did fall down the stairs in order to achieve the falling shot in-camera, both for the visuals and the sound fx.**

- **Dana Curcio filmed her outdoor scene in a public parking garage in the Akron region. The rest of her scenes, as well as Randy's scenes, were filmed in Dana and Randy's own home in Akron, Ohio.**

- **The Halloween decoration that scares Martin in the library is actually a full-sized cardboard Tom Cruise standee wearing a vintage Scream mask that's been turned around.**

- **Randy Shaffer gained a love of cinema, audio drama and acting at an early age, often recording himself on a brown-and-beige Fisher Price tape recorder in the '80s. From ages 3-14, Shaffer would deliver full performances of stories or movies he wanted to make. A sample of one of these childhood recordings was used in *Creaks* as an homage.**

- **Shaffer's late sister Kelly Rudin is the voice of the child, sampled from a 1979 audio recording from her childhood (before Randy was born). She is singing the folk campfire tune, *"Smile, Don't You Know God Loves You!"***

- **Many VFX and SFX were achieved in-camera, including the disappearing horses in the mirror during the film's finale. There are over 530 unique sound effects, fx and visual elements used in the film. Four fx in the film were achieved using generative tools, including the *"Freaky as F**k"* show intro, some sound for the *Gun City* ad, the basement scare (achieved with a blend of real footage and animated stills) and the opening/end credits darkness creature (animated from a hand-drawn illustration).**

- **The rain is heard but never seen, meant instead to represent the ever-present threat of the darkness itself.**

- **The film's poster features a bistable image. A shadow that, at first, appears to be a claw. It eventually transforms into the eye shape of a screaming scared woman.**

- **The number 237 in the screenname *darkmatterconscience237* is an homage to Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*.**

- **August 29th is a reference to *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, and a point of no return.**

- **Martin Bloom's last name suggests something capable of growing — another key to the film's looming threat.**

- **Randy Shaffer's hair design and look is based on his late uncle, Mike Shaffer.**

- **As an homage to his longtime friend, artist Shawn Coss's acclaimed book, *It's All in Your Head*, is featured prominently in the library scene.**

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## MEDIA & FESTIVAL INQUIRIES

**Randy Shaffer**
Writer / Director / Producer — *Creaks*

**Press materials, screening links, filmmaker interviews, festival information and additional production materials available upon request.**

**CREAKS (2026):** Official Trailer | Official Teaser | Making of Documentary | Film Festival Page