

two days back

A Mont Alto Film Project

Directed by Kevin Alexander Boon

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SYNOPSIS

A five-year-old girl on a picnic with her family follows a feral boy into the woods and is lost on Bear Mountain for two days. Seventeen years later, Emma (Katharine Ada Howard), now in college, remembers nothing of what happened to her during those two days, but retains a deep apprehension about the woods. Attracted to Ben (Matthew Baldoni), the president of the campus environmental club, she reluctantly agrees to accompany him and a group of environmentally-conscious students up the mountain on a six-day mission to catch forestry students suspected of illegal foresting. When people go missing and bodies begin to surface, the groups join forces, but before they can make it back down the mountain, they stumble across a hunter's cabin and Emma comes face to face with the dark mystery of her past.

PRINCIPAL CAST



KATHARINE ADA HOWARD (Emma)

Katie trained at Shenandoah Conservatory where she earned a BFA in acting. She has worked in film, television and theater. Her most recent accomplishments include earning Best Actress in the 2007 Baltimore 48hr film festival. With the exception of the role of Emma in *Two Days Back*, her favorite roles include playing Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Marty in *Grease*.



JOHNNO WILSON (John)

Johnno graduated from Georgetown University in 2007 with a B.A. in English. He was actively involved in the television station there, hosting and starring in several shows. He began his acting career in the DC area in 2010 and has since been in numerous film, television and theater productions throughout both the DC and Los Angeles areas. Johnno is continuing his acting career in Los Angeles where he now resides.



MATTHEW BALDONI (Ben)

Matt trained at West Virginia University, Wayside Theater and the American Shakespeare Center. He has appeared in numerous stage productions, including *A Miracle on 34th Street*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Romeo and Juliet* at the Wayside Theater, and as Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*. He also performs in film and has appeared in a number of short films, such as *Extraction* (2010) and has a role in the upcoming web series *Graduated*.



BRANDON RICE (Steve)

Brandon began acting in High School at the prompting of one of his teachers. After college, he was drawn back to acting and has since appeared onstage as Leonard in "Past is the Present, Imperfect," as Ben Telfair in "The Stonemason," and a number of other theater productions in the Washington/Baltimore area. Brandon has also appeared in independent films, industrials, commercials, and on the web series "The Reservation."



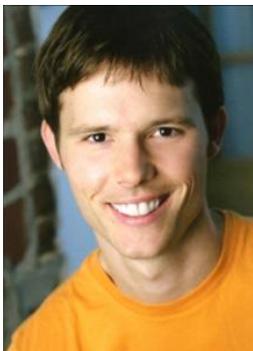
AMANDA KOHBERGER (Lori)

Amanda began acting in college, performing in a number of theatrical productions. She has since appeared in several film shorts including Claude Martin's "Goin in" and Chris Fletcher's "Lonesome." Between roles, she studies theater and psychology at East Stroudsburg University.



EVAN NELSON (Blake)

Evan is currently studying Media Studies and Film at Penn State and is one of the core members of the Mont Alto Film Project's production team. Evan contributed to the screenplay for Two Days Back and worked camera and lighting during filming. When the actor originally cast as Blake dropped out on day three of shooting, Evan stepped into the role and proved a formidable talent in front of the camera as well as behind.



KARL BITTNER (Chase)

Karl is a graduate of the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts in Washington, D.C. He has worked on independent films, industrials, and commercials, in addition to performing on stage with various DC area theaters, including 1st Stage, Keegan Theatre, American Century Theatre and Charter Theatre. Recent TV appearances include: Witness to Waco (MSNBC) and The Hunt for Lincoln's Assassin (National Geographic Channel).



TYLER LA MARR (Mitch)

Tyler studied acting in Baltimore while serving in the United States Marine Corps. He appeared in a number of productions in the Baltimore/DC area, including a background role in Transformers: Dark of the Moon. Since completing his service, Tyler has moved to New York City where he is pursuing a BFA in acting from Marymount Manhattan College.



PATRICK ACKLEY (Owen)

In addition to acting in films and shorts in Pennsylvania, Washington, Maryland and Virginia, Patrick is one of the founding members of the indie alternative rock band Maybe Aviator, which originates from Stafford, Virginia and performs throughout the Northeast.

FILMMAKERS



KEVIN ALEXANDER BOON

Director/Producer/Writer/Composer/Editor

Kevin is a professor at Penn State University, where he teaches film, screenwriting, writing and literature and coordinates the English Program for the Mont Alto Campus. He is a published author of literary and film scholarship, including his groundbreaking *Script Culture* and the *American Screenplay* (Wayne State UP, 2008), which argues for the literary merit of the screenplay genre. He has also published award-winning fiction and poetry and is an accomplished artist, playwright and musician (he composed the soundtrack for *Two Days Back*).

His first foray into film was a documentary short he wrote, produced, and directed on the painter Charles Dickinson (*The Art of Charles Dickinson*, Third Child Productions and Slapping Wind Films, 2006). Kevin was the visionary behind the Mont Alto Film Project, a two-year practicum in filmmaking designed to work with a select group of students on the production of an independent feature film. Kevin's friends and colleagues often refer to him as a renaissance man, but his own assessment is: "I'm just too obstinate to quit once I've made up my mind to do something."

The crew for *Two Days Back* was comprised of a dozen Penn State students involved in the Mont Alto Film Project. Each performed numerous roles during development, pre-production, production, and post-production.

TRESSA BELLOWS

First Assistant Director
Production Coordinator
Writer
Costume and Wardrobe
Makeup

MEGAN BROWN

Special Effects Makeup
Makeup
Wardrobe
Writer

ALLEN CRAMM	Camera Sound Boom Operator
ADAM EISENTROUT	Camera Sound Writer
JESSICA KOERTH	Script Supervisor Writer Makeup and Wardrobe Editor
SARA MOORE	Editor Camera Sound Assistant Script Supervisor
EVAN NELSON	Camera Chief Lighting Technician Sound Writer
JASMINE SALTERS	Costume and Wardrobe Assistant Lighting Tech Story Camera Boom Operator
JAMES STERNER	Camera Sound Writer
EVAN MCELHINEY	Set Design Stunt Coordinator Chief Electrician Editor
JACOB HECKMAN	Boom Grip Editor
DARREN OLAH (intern)	Boom Grip

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



I've long been of the opinion that if you want to do something you should do it. When I was a younger man, with all my original hair follicles, I first heard that old bromide "writers write." Years later the truth of that simple phrase solidified in me and I came to realize that what was true for writing was equally true for everything else. Painters paint. Dancers dance. Musicians play music. Songwriters write songs. And filmmakers make films.

Around 2000 -2001, when I moved from New York City to assume a position at Penn State, I noticed that technology was rapidly advancing to the point where the tools of filmmaking were quickly becoming affordable. That was when I began to envision a two-year film project that would take the same group through the entire filmmaking process. My original idea was to free students from the confines of the classroom and put them into a real-world situation where they could take ownership of as much of the project as they were capable, and where they could actually do something instead of practicing doing something. Instead of doing student work, they would do professional work, facing all the tough decisions and hard choices associated with the real world. In the end, I imagined, they could celebrate their efforts with legitimate film credits.

It was 2009 before I received funding for the project. With a meager budget of only \$15,000, I set out with my intrepid crew to create a no-budget independent film that would not be a student production, but a professional film, one that could play alongside other independent films. In the fall of 2009, we began working on the story together. We finished the screenplay over the holidays and began preproduction work in the spring of 2010.

From the beginning, I knew we were going to use professional actors. I went over the basics of auditioning talent with the members of the project, and we began casting, first with open auditions and then by invitation. Out of the open auditions, we cast Tyler La Marr (Mitch), Amanda Kohberger (Lori), Patrick Ackley (Owen), and, to our great good fortune, Katie Howard (Emma), who had seen a flyer that Adam Eisentrout had put up at a restaurant, of all places. We cemented the rest of the principal cast in individual auditions.

One of my original concerns when beginning the project, and something I mentioned when we were working on the script, was that we would have trouble finding actors who were good enough to pull off heavy, dramatic scenes. I remember cautioning the students about this, saying that we should keep the screenplay as visual as possible to avoid problems with weak performances. But once I started working with the cast, I put all those concerns aside. They were consummate professionals and did a wonderful job delivering on camera, particularly, Katie Howard, who brought Emma to life so completely that I couldn't imagine having made the film with anyone else. She is a fabulous talent that deserves every good fortune that could come her way.

Because we had no budget, we could only manage one read-through before cameras rolled in September of 2010. We had 16 shooting days, which we shot on weekends so the crew could attend classes during the week. They were grueling days, most of them out in the woods among the bugs and thorns, but everyone outdid him/herself and I was thoroughly impressed with how the group came together as a working crew.

After we wrapped principal photography, most of the group graduated or headed up to Main Campus to complete their degrees, but four students remained to help with some of the editing. The rough cut was finished at the beginning of summer and I went on to finish the film and score the soundtrack, which I completed about a year after we began principal photography.

Now that the film is finally going before audiences, I am pleased—not only in the fact that we did it, but that we did it together against impossible odds.

Q: How did the story for *Two Days Back* come about?

KB: It emerged out of discussions with the students involved in the film project. Early on I talked with them about non-budget scriptwriting. I mentioned how Robert Rodriguez had written *El Mariachi* based on what he had access to—a jail, a hotel, a bus, etc.—and that we needed to do the same thing. The Penn State Mont Alto campus houses an important forestry school and is surrounded by beautiful woods and mountains. So naturally, we began kicking around story ideas that involved forestry students, woods and the environment. Once we had the story arc for our main character in place, we simply filled in the gaps.

Q: The film was originally described as a mystery disguised as a horror film; what did you mean by that?

KB: The horror film is the go-to genre for a lot of no-budget independent films. I didn't want to make another gore-fest with zombies eating brains. I wanted a dramatic film, one with some depth. The central mystery of *Two Days Back* is what happened to this five-year-old girl when she went missing in the woods seventeen years earlier. The film answers that question, to a point, by the end, but it doesn't follow the traditional trajectory of a mystery film, which involves the steady accumulation of clues all leading to a revelatory moment when the mystery is solved. Instead, our film follows the trajectory of a conventional horror film, wherein a handful of students go off into the woods and begin to die. But I intentionally didn't want to use horror clichés. I didn't want the women to be helpless victims. And in the end we made the film about Emma's self-empowerment.

Q: What was it like working with the cast?

KB: I loved it. I come from a performance background. I began acting in theater when I was 14 and went on to study acting in Atlanta before segueing into music and then followed a checkered path to academics. I've been in academics for a while now, but I have a lot of fond memories of the theater. Being around these young, talented actors brought those back for me. I also appreciated the huge personal sacrifices they were making on behalf of this film. I will always be grateful to them for that.

Q: What are your aspirations for the completed film?

KB: I realize that a lot of people who make independent films, especially no-budget ones, are hoping that the film will launch huge careers for them or, at the very least, make some money; but my objective from the beginning has been to make a movie that audiences will enjoy. I don't really care if the movie makes a million bucks or wins awards as long as audiences walk away with a sense that their time was well spent.

Q: What filmmakers most inspired you?

KB: I really admire the French director Claude Lelouch, and I love what Anand Tucker, who directed the third film in the Red Riding series, does with the camera. And, of course, I'm a fan of filmmakers who manage to make great films with limited budgets, such as Robert Rodriguez with *El Mariachi* and Christopher Nolan, with *Following*. *Following* was Nolan's first film and I believe he made it for only 15 or 20 thousand dollars. It's a remarkable example of what can happen when a truly gifted story teller gets his or her hands on a camera.

Q: You came to filmmaking later than most directors; what drove you to branch into film?

KB: Well, I like to write, I like storytelling and acting and art and music and theater. Film is the hub where all those spokes meet, so I don't think I branched off into film as much as film became the natural extension of all my individual interests.

Q: What are your hopes for the students who you worked with on the film?

KB: First off and foremost, I hope they realize what an amazing accomplishment this film is for them. The film wouldn't exist without them and each of them has reason to be proud of what he or she contributed to the final product. Secondly, I hope they all learned something about the difficulties of producing a feature film, particularly a no-budget one.

Q: How would you characterize low- or no-budget filmmaking?

KB: It's like planning twenty-nine weddings at the same time.

Q: Where do you go from here?

KB: I'd be interested in running another Mont Alto Film Project, especially if audiences enjoy *Two Days Back*. But I'd also be interested in producing a film outside of the project, if I can make that happen. I have a lot of stories inside, and it would be immensely satisfying to see them come to life on the screen.