



OFFICIAL SELECTION



THE A FILM BY ERIN DOYLE COOPER

INVADERS

PRESS KIT

LOG LINE

A pregnant pioneer woman and her family meet a supernatural fate after breaking from their wagon train to California and ignoring a series of ominous dreams.

SYNOPSIS

We open on a pioneer campsite in the Rockies, where two pioneer men are setting up camp. One chops firewood, the other pounds wooden stakes into the earth.

We fade to night, and hover just outside the firelight. Then, we push in toward the tent, and flash to several dream-like images of The Mother, a protector of Native people and the land, culminating in a deafening scream.

Inside the tent, pregnant pioneer Rose Walters awakens with a gasp to discover that her daughter Minnie has been haunted by the same dream. Minnie warns, "we shouldn't be here." Rose lies awake, terrified, and then... *pum pum pum pum*. She can do nothing but listen as her nightmare comes to life.



SPECS

TOTAL RUNNING TIME: **4 minutes 11 seconds**

ASPECT RATIO: **1.66:1**

AUDIO: **5.1 Stereo**

LANGUAGE: **English**

FORMAT: **Digital**

SHOT ON: **ARRI Alexa Mini LF with Cannon K35 and FD Lenses**



CONTACT

DIRECTOR: **Erin Doyle Cooper**

EMAIL: RockabayProductions@gmail.com

PHONE: **716.361.3138**

WEBSITE: theinvadersfilm.com

TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/789083298>



PRESS CLIPS

CINEMA FEMME


[LINK TO FULL ARTICLE](#)

CINEMA FEMME

About ▾ Interviews Cinema Femme Short Film Fest – 2023 ▾ The Call Sheet Support Cinema Femme Subscribe to Cinema Femme

Search 🔍

📷 📺 📱 🎧




“The Invaders” is a horror short based on a historical trauma that runs in the same vein of Robert Eggers’ “The Witch.” The short is a proof of concept that will be made into a feature directed by **Erin Doyle Cooper** and executive produced by *Fargo*’s Allison Tolman. The film takes place in 1852 on a wagon train to California with a pioneer family that includes a pregnant woman. The family ignores a series of ominous dreams, and they all meet a supernatural fate. The historical details are very important to Erin: “You don’t have to dig too much into history to find something terrifying.” She continued, “The truth is pregnant pioneer women walked across the country. I cannot even fathom doing that. It also came with cultural genocide. So I was very interested in that tension point.”

FILM FESTIVALS, INTERVIEWS, SHORT FILMS

Emerging filmmakers empower audiences at Heartland’s 2023 Indy Shorts International Film Festival

July 25, 2023 / By Rebecca Martin / 0 comments



“The Invaders”

CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR ACTORS

[LINK TO 10 MIN PODCAST](#)



HollyShorts x CFA w/ Erin Doyle Cooper on “The Invaders” Period Western Location...

FILMMAKING TEAM

ERIN DOYLE COOPER WRITER/DIRECTOR



Erin Doyle Cooper is an award-winning filmmaker and creative director whose career has spanned indie film, experiential production design, and advertising. She made her first short film *Vlog* in 2009, and that same year, recorded an EP of indie rock for kids to compliment her puppet-musical-pilot *Princess Elleanor and the Muddy Sneakers*. As a Creative Director, she's overseen award-winning work for brands including MasterCard, Budweiser, and Pepsi, where she led creative for the promotion of Lady Gaga's Halftime Show and the 2018 Super Bowl spot starring Cindy Crawford. She's also directed spots for major brands including Midol and Nature Made.

As a filmmaker, Erin focuses on stories that challenge people's ingrained perceptions, and loves using genre as a tool. Her most recent film *Believe Her*, starring Allison Tolman, premiered at the SCAD Savannah Film Festival, where it won Best Global Short: Narrative. In addition to *The Invaders*, Erin has made three other shorts in the past year: two as a producer for first time female directors titled *Big Sur* (Dir: Lila Dupree) and *Pick Me Up* (Dir: Allison Tolman), and one as a writer/director titled *True Love Waits*, based on her experience growing up in Purity Culture. All have premiered at Oscar Qualifying festivals. Erin holds a BFA in Acting from SUNY Buffalo, a post-graduate certificate from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), and studied improv and sketch at UCB. She lives in LA, where she recently completed the Women in Film Mentoring Program as a multi-hyphenate, with mentors Rose Catherine Pickney, Melissa Darmon, and Ramaa Mosley.

ALLISON TOLMAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



Allison Tolman is a Golden Globe and Emmy nominated actress who successfully avoided actually making a living in the field until the fall of 2013, when she landed a seminal role in FX's *Fargo*. Her performance as Molly Solverson put her on the map and garnered her a Critic's Choice Award. Born in Houston, Texas- Allison holds a BFA in theatrical performance from Baylor University. After graduation, she moved to Dallas where she helped found and foster the independent, ensemble-based, non-profit Second Thought Theatre- while also learning that being an adult is super hard. In 2009, she relocated to Chicago and was accepted into Second City's Conservatory Training Program.

Producing theatre taught Tolman to think in macro and become unrelentingly solution oriented- skills that would eventually prove useful as she moved into serving as a creative and executive producer in film. In 2021 she wrote and directed her first short film, *Pick Me Up*. While she continues to act, Tolman plans to focus heavily on writing, producing, and directing moving forward. Her time in the theatre and comedy worlds generated a deep love of the collaborative process, and more than anything she enjoys the practice of helping others break story, improve their scripts, and get things done. Tolman currently lives in Hollywood with a toothless cat named Bud who enjoys sleeping in the sun and sneezing directly into her face. Other notable acting roles include Natalie in *The Facts of Life, Live!*, Mary Pat in *Good Girls*, Alma in *Why Women Kill*, and Seemingly Normal Woman that time she met Katey Sagal at a party.

FILMMAKING TEAM



DEMI WALDRON

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Demi is a cinematographer currently based in Los Angeles. She began her career shooting short films and documentaries, where she developed her sensitivity to character and story, as well as her aptitude for collaboration. She works primarily in narrative and documentary spaces, with a special interest in how the two genres can overlap visually and emotionally. Most recently, she lensed an upcoming episode of Hulu's *Taste the Nation*. Narrative films lensed by Demi have played at Outfest LA, Cannes Lions, Florida Film Festival, Savannah Film Festival, Athena Film Festival, Sarasota Film Festival, and more. Her short documentary "[CINEMATOGRAPHER](#)," was awarded a Vimeo Staff Pick in 2019. She is an alumni of the Savannah College of Art and Design, AFI's Cinematography Intensive for Women, and the Television Academy Foundation.



LEAH MATA FRAGUA

COSTUME DESIGNER: THE MOTHER/NATIVE CONSULTANT

Leah Mata Fragua is a member of the yak tityu tityu yak tiłhini (the people of tiłhini) Northern Chumash Tribe, located on the Central California Coast. Leah is an Institute of American Indian Arts professor in the Indigenous Liberal Studies department. Leah also works as a contemporary artist creating through traditional practices, focused on living forms of regalia and jewelry while building ongoing traditions in California Indian arts. Her work as a place-based artist is grounded in an understanding of the past, which is interdependent with the future, and her relationship with her homelands. Mata Fragua has earned top honors such as the Autry Indian Market 2012 - Best in Diverse Cultural Arts, Heard Museum Fair 2013, 2016 - First Place, 2018 Best of Classification in Personal Attire. Santa Fe Indian Market 2018 Personal Attire- Second Place. In 2011, Leah was awarded the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship and was selected as a Master Artist recipient for the Alliance of California Traditional Arts (ACTA) in 2013. Most recently, Mata Fragua is the 2020 Barbra Dobkin Fellow at the School of Advanced Research. Leah's education, which includes a B.A. in Anthropology and an M.A. in Cultural Sustainability, has afforded her access to various collections and archives, furthering her understanding of the technical and material expertise of yak tityu tityu (The People) and resisting the hindered access for community members whose relatives' works are held in academic collections. Unlike other mediums, most of the materials needed to create traditional Northern Chumash material culture are site-specific and can require years of planning to complete each piece. The importance of gathering materials seasonally and with respect for the limits of each environment, even before they can be processed and then used, is a practice she engages in collaboration with her homeland and her family. Leah is committed to environmental issues that directly impact the ability to gather materials needed to sustain her artistic practice. Finding ways to ensure each generation can sustain these art forms is an integral part of Mata Fragua's process, allowing her to incorporate her artistic practice with her intention as an educator, researcher, and community member.



JESSICA RAE HUBER

COMPOSER

Jessica Rae Huber is a film and television composer who has written music for projects such as *The Walking Dead*, *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Outlander*, *Black Sails*, *60 Days In*, and *Constantine*. She is an in-demand independent film composer and is frequently recruited to write additional music for other composers.

Jessica is one of the original composers chosen for *The Future Is Female: a Concert for Women in Film* where she conducted her original piece for a sold-out crowd.

She previously worked as an Assistant Composer and Scoring Manager for a major music production company and has become a highly sought-after consultant who has recruited, built, and maintained scoring teams and workflows for multiple composers.

She holds a degree in film and video game scoring from Berklee College of Music. During this period she also learned the art of not freezing to death and being the only woman in a room.

CAST



CHRISTY ST. JOHN
ROSE WALTERS

Christy St. John just got murdered on *NCIS: Los Angeles*! She's also known for playing Allie VanLandingham in HBO's *The Sex Lives of College Girls*, girl-next-door Susie in *The Christmas Chronicles 2* starring Kurt Russell, scientist Elle in Twitch's Emmy award winning *Artificial*, ditzzy waitress Karen in Bounce TV's *In The Cut*, and type-A Chelsea in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Interview*, which she also co-wrote. She trained at Carnegie Mellon University and currently teaches branding for actors at Robert D'Avanzo Studios. www.christystjohn.com



LORELEI OLIVIA MOTE
MINNIE WALTERS

After shooting a string of great commercials including spots and print campaigns for Target and eBay, Lorelei Olivia Mote jumped right into the TV/Film world without missing a beat. Her most recent theatrical credits include young Daisy Jones in *Daisy Jones and the Six*, a co-star on *American Horror Stories*, and an awesome leading role in a kids' adventure movie called *Riddle Of Fire*, which premiered at Cannes. If you don't recognize her yet, you definitely will soon.



CLAUDIA ELMORE
THE MOTHER

Claudia is of Indigenous American, Hispanic, and European American heritage. She grew up in Hawaii on Oahu's western country hillside among the sugar cane fields and red dirt hills of Makakilo.

A love of acting emerged through a childhood watching Japanese Kabuki theatre and cultural children's theatre performances. She studied both mediums of storytelling at the University of Hawaii, and later went on to earn an MFA in acting from the USC School of Dramatic Arts. TV credits include the Emmy-winning comedy series *The Kominsky Method*, and on the long-standing television drama, *Hawaii Five-O*.

FULL CREDIT LIST

Written & Directed by **Erin Doyle Cooper**
Executive Produced by **Allison Tolman**
Erin Doyle Cooper

Executive Producers **James P. Stephens**
& **Hilary Walker**

Producer **Bri Goldberg**

Associate Producer **Angela Cristantello**
Will Cooper

CAST:

Rose **Christy St. John**
Minnie **Lorelei Olivia Mote**
The Mother **Claudia Elmore**
Willilam **Will Cooper**
Martin **Simon Haycock**

Director of Photography **Demi Waldron**

First Assistant Director **Noah Johnson**
Script Supervisor **Liam Hoops**

Camera Operator **James Hammond**
First Assistant Camera **Makarya Santilla Diaz**
Second Assistant Camera **Cody J. Cook**
Head Crane Tech **Oytun Matt Sahan**
Cane Tech **Paul Vought**
DIT/Art Assistant **Nicole Gellman**
Set Photographer **Kyle Rose**

Production Sound Mixer **Matt Burgette**
Gaffer **Tate McCurdy**
Best Boy Blectric **Colvin Amg**
Key Grip **Gavin Chin**
Best Boy Grip **Mayur Patankar**

Production Designer **Rachelle Flauta**
Set Dresser **Antaeus Littlejohn**

Costume Designer **Meredith Peebles**
The Mother Designer **Leah Mata Fragua**
Hair and Makeup **Orlando Marin**



Casting Director **Jane Flowers**

Covid Compliance Officer **Matthew Fischer**
SudioTeacher **Max Zarou**

Production Assistant **Clayton Berg**
Editor **Rene Peraza**
Assistant Editor **Giselle Murillo**
Brandon Simmons

Music by **Jessica Rae Huber**

Colorist **Jenny Montgomery**
VFX **Brian Magarian**

Re-Recording Mixer & Sound Designer **Steve Bucino, CAS**

Special Thanks:

Elite Camera Support • We Make Movies • Agua Dulce Film Ranch
Spartan Bros Catering • Express Grip & Lighting
Lensworks • Omega Cinema Props • Premiere Props
Phil's Animal Ranch • Company 3 • Topsheet
Tracy & Fletcher Doyle • Reney Slackman • Michelle Dimuzio
Justin Giddings • Katie Pace • Clementine Henson

And everybody who helped support the film on **Seed & Spark**

Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR

Q: WHAT INSPIRED THIS FILM?

Erin Doyle Cooper: I've been writing feminist historical horror since 7th grade, before I had the vocabulary to understand what I was writing. And I love Westerns. I grew up with American Girl Dolls, and spent many hours playing "pioneers" with my childhood best friend. As an adult, I'm interested in the stories that haven't been told, the other perspectives. The West was the most diverse place in American history, but you wouldn't know it from watching most of Hollywood's great Westerns. I'm fascinated by its brutal reality, and I've spent the past number of years researching what it was actually like.

In summer 2019, I was writing a female-driven Western when a shooter killed 23 people at an El Paso Walmart, declaring his attack a response to "the Hispanic invasion" at the border. I decided that instead of just bringing a woman's perspective to a Western, I'd explore the uncomfortable truth at America's roots. Thus, *The Invaders* is more than a horror film, and more than a western: it's an accountability fantasy for myself and every other child weaned on Laura Ingles Wilder and the notion of Manifest Destiny.

Q: AND THE FEATURE IS ALREADY WRITTEN?

EDC: Yes! I had a reading for the first draft of the feature on March 7, 2020. It was the last major thing I did before the world shut down. I buried myself in rewrites for the rest of that year until I was finally happy with it. Allison Tolman, who starred in my film *Believe Her*, read five drafts and gave excellent notes on each one. And then I started working on the proof of concept script for the short. Allison is truly the best creative partner I could have asked for, I'm so lucky that she jumped on this one as a producer.



Q: HOW DID YOU TRANSLATE IT TO A SHORT?

EDC: I wrote several versions that were 15-20 pages. But the lore in the feature is so big, and there are so many characters, that these scripts were all unsatisfying. They were falling into the trap of trying to be little features. I took a step back and watched a ton of horror shorts, including the brilliant *Lights Out*, and realized that the best ones are SHORT. They introduce you to the world, set the tone, have a quick scare, and they're out. So I wrote THAT version of *The Invaders*, sent it around, and people were immediately excited about it.

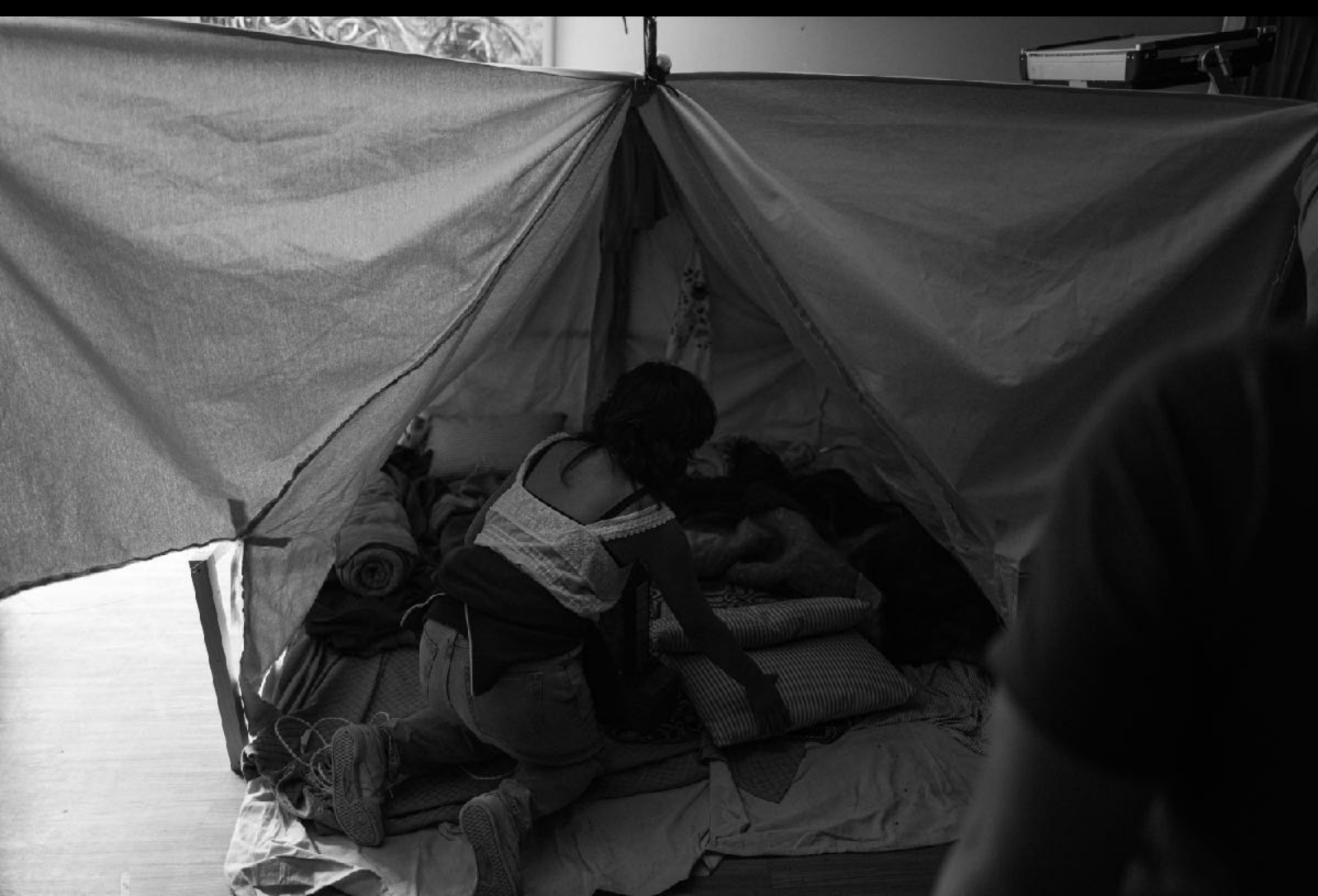
Q: HOW DID RENOWNED ARTIST LEAH MATA FRAGUA GET INVOLVED?

EDC: This film is, first and foremost, a white accountability fantasy. But there's a huge Native American component in *The Mother*, and I knew I couldn't move forward with the project without Native involvement. I reached out to everybody I knew and was eventually connected to Leah, who made a massive imprint on both the design of *The Mother* and her lore. She immediately understood what I was trying to do, and was so generous with her ideas and constructive criticism. When we make the feature, we hope to shoot in Montana, and hire as much local Native crew as possible.

Q: THE MOTHER IS BASED ON MOTHER EARTH, RIGHT? HOW DID YOU DESIGN HER CHARACTER?

EDC: Yes. As both the monster and the hero in the film, we discussed at length how this Goddess would dress for war. Rather than align her with a specific tribe, we grounded her look- from her futuristic warpaint to her prairie-inspired dress- in Indigenous Futurism, a nod to her ability to stand for a better future for Native people.

We landed on ram horns for The Mother's headpiece as they span Indigenous cultures across the globe. But more than that- Christianity associates ram horns with evil. By having The Mother wear ram horns, she is reclaiming this symbol and its power, and appearing all the more terrifying to our pioneer family.



Q: HOW DID YOU BUILD A PIONEER CAMPSITE ON A SHORT FILM BUDGET?

EDC: People thought I was insane for building that set piece into a short, but I'm really good at digging in my heels when I'm told that something can't be done. I was obsessive about the historical detail, and I picked 1852 for a specific reason: it was the year that Westward expansion exploded from a trickle of mostly male miners to thousands of settler families, and it was the beginning of the end of friendly relations between the Western Native Nations and white folk. I came to my brilliant production designer, Rachelle Flauta, with a ton of research. I did not want a bunch of generic "Western" or "Oregon Trail" props, as most of what we've seen on film is from the 1880's, when covered wagons were basically a relic. And I was adamant that we needed a real wagon. She found one for a fraction of what we thought it would cost, and it was fully operable.

Rachelle also built two versions of the tent: one shell for exteriors, and one with movable walls so that we could shoot interiors at every angle. The inspiration for this came from watching behind the scenes footage of Kelly Reichardt's gorgeous pioneer film *Meek's Cutoff*.

Q: WHAT WERE YOUR OTHER VISUAL REFERENCES?

EDC: Robert Egger's *The Witch*. The first time I saw that film, I felt like somebody had stepped into my brain. We used the same aspect ratio, 1.66:1. I love it because it's wide enough to get an imposing view of the landscape, but still cropped enough to beautifully frame the human face, and make you wonder what's going on at the edges. I also took inspiration from Albert Bierstadt's iconic paintings of the American West, obsessed with finding the horror that lurks behind the rosy images we saw in our textbooks.

Demi Waldron, my amazing DP, also pulled a ton of references from films including *The Green Knight*, *The Nightingale*, *The Power of the Dog*, and *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*.





Q: A LOT OF THE HORROR HAPPENS OFF SCREEN. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT CHOICE?

EDC: There are two reasons. First, there is something terrifying about sitting with Rose as she listens to her entire family being slaughtered, and unable to do anything but imagine what's happening. Second, budget. By relying on sound design, we were able to tell a big, visually rich story, and still manage to shoot it all in one painstakingly planned day.

Here I need to shout out Steve Bucino, who sound designed and mixed the whole thing. The Mother's scream is built out many layered sounds, and since she's Mother Earth, every single one of them is of the earth. The script described is as, "howling wind, a Mountain Lion, and the felling of an ancient tree," but we also worked in things like grinding rocks and rushing water.



Q: THE FILM ENDS WITH A PIANO TUNE. WHAT INSPIRED THIS?

EDC: In the feature, Rose is a pianist, and in my very favorite scene, she plays a haunting tune on an untuned piano that was abandoned by a wagon train. I sent that scene to Jessica Rae Huber, who has scored three films for me, as a jumping off point for the end credits. We talked a lot about the music of the time, how it traveled from place to place as sheet music instead of recordings, and how Rose's youth in New Orleans would have influenced her style.

When she sent me the first draft of the song, I cried because it was so beautiful. Getting to work with talented people who take your ideas and make them better is my favorite thing in the world. I had that experience with every person who worked on this film.

Q: HOW DID YOU RAISE 158% OF YOUR CROWDFUNDING GOAL?

EDC: I'd previously crowdfunded \$20,000 to make *Believe Her*, and learned a lot. The *Invaders* was a more ambitious project, and I felt like I'd raise more money if I could show receipts. So I decided to make a big personal investment for production, and run the campaign to get through post. Then, I hired The Kickstarter Guy Justin Giddings, and we hit our \$20,000 goal in the first week. It was WILD. We ultimately raised over \$30,000, which was great, because the film definitely cost more than 20K.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR CASTING PROCESS LIKE?

EDC: I worked with Casting Director Jane Flowers, who I've known since college, and she brought in the most insane range of talent. We cast Christy St. John as Rose first, and then looked for talent that could realistically play her daughter. Minnie is scripted to be much younger, but kids are always a variable on set. Knowing that we needed to get her coverage in a half a day, we made a conscious decision to see a range of ages for that role. I was torn about this until we saw Lorelei work in the callback. She and Christy had incredible chemistry, and she was able to take direction and make choices in a way that many adult actors can't do. I'm positive that she and Christy are going to be stars.

We saw so many beautiful Native actors to play The Mother. That decision was nearly impossible, but Claudia Elmore was able to project rage, heartbreak, and power all at the same time. She was such a trooper on set: it was nearly freezing with a strong wind, and she stood bare-shouldered on this hill and screamed her guts out. I'm so proud of how those shots turned out. She is a Goddess indeed.

