

MACOPROJECT V.S. COLIN SKEVINGTON

With a star studded cast and crew, writer & director Colin Skevington joins us to discuss his newly released film, *The Lossen*.

Colin, it's a pleasure to have you with us. Can you tell us what it was that made you want to pursue filmmaking?

Thanks Avery. It's a pleasure to be with you too. I remember being blown away the first time I went to the cinema. I was probably 4 and saw Disney's Snow White. It just left me mesmerised. I was the kind of child that wanted to know how things worked. I was always in trouble for taking toys apart to see what was inside them and that's how I felt about film as I grew up. I wanted to know how they were made. It just fascinated me and there was a strong inner desire to know more. I believe there's an element of destiny in what we are drawn to in life.

Could you tell us a little bit about where you're from and how it's impacted your career?

I'm based north of London in a rural community. I need to be in London some of the time but I don't feel being out of the hub has affected what I'm doing. I have always believed that innovation comes from the fringe. If you're on the edge observing you see much more. Sometimes when you're right in the middle of the action you can lose perspective. I started working in film professionally in Sydney Australia. It was an amazing experience but I came back to the UK because at the time I felt there were more opportunities here. Also, I believe where we are from is for a reason and so that impacts on our ideas as film makers. I've always felt the UK has a dark undertone. A lot of fairy tales and mythical stories have come from these shores and that has certainly had an impact on me. *The Lossen* was shot in the village where I live. It was the perfect location for the film because of the atmosphere it offered as well as making it much easier to pull the film together. I'm a great believer in serendipity. I met Tom Linden our composer on the film at a Christmas party in the village; he just happened to move there and had written music for feature films and tv shows. I met our cinematographer Hatti Beanland, who's based in Los Angeles, when her mother happened to knock on the door of the cottage in a village, miles from nowhere, when I was writing the script. For me there's an element of "meant to be", so go with your heart and you will know where you need to be based.



Your new film, *The Lossen* provides an interesting perspective on death and the choices we make. How did you know it was time to tell this story?

I feel we are living in times where people are unsure about the future. What has seemed normal for so long is now upside down and people are searching for answers. It seems to me that the answers we are looking for are "outside the box". When we are unsure and lost we look for meaning or purpose and if we're in a job or a relationship for example that doesn't feed our soul then we need to search for something more fulfilling in life. Death is one subject we shy away from in the West and the idea of getting to the end of our lives knowing we have not fed a deep part of ourselves or perhaps not lived a more fulfilling life, is something we don't want to consider so we block it out. *The Lossen* turns our perception of death on its head, it's saying that it's never too late to find deeper fulfilment, it just may not come in the way we expect it. *The Lossen* is about following your heart and not your head. We can choose to be what's deep within us or what our parents, society and culture etc wants us to be. Ultimately we pay the price for the choices we make and *The Lossen* explores the idea of the consequences of not having the courage to be our greater self.

Can you tell us a little bit about Moon Watcher?

I started Moon Watcher after being commissioned to make a series of social issue dramas, including "Our Secret World" about the effects of domestic abuse on children and "Last Licks" about knife crime and why young males are attracted into gangs. We want to develop Moon Watcher to make narrative films that entertain but offer messages that make us look at our own lives. That's the beauty of film, we can drift into another world and reflect on it.

Moon Watcher
media

Could you tell us a little bit about your relationship with the cast & crew?

I'm always conscious of the considerable contributions of cast and crew. People often ask me what's the key role of a director and I always say "To make actors feel safe". Actors need to be able to explore freely. If they feel judged they cannot give their best. We have time restraints of course when we are shooting but I always make sure there is an opportunity to attempt a scene in different ways. Ultimately I usually know what I am looking for but other input is vital. Film making is a collaborative process but my role is to ensure the vision remains throughout the process. I try not to show any stress. People say I always seem calm, but that's just the exterior. I like to go into a shoot well prepared, but with flexibility to create in the moment. I like to think that I'm always open to ideas from others. So many film makers say "My" film but to me it's "Our" film. I'm also keen to make sure people get opportunities. Our wonderful production designer on the 'The Lossen' sent her resume in on spec. I met her at the National Film Theatre in London after seeing her beautiful portfolio. I knew she was the person for the job. She said to me "You know I'm only an assistant?" I said "Talent is talent and job titles are job titles". Madeau did wonderful work on The Lossen and I'm looking forward to working with her again.



How has the supernatural world inspired you thus far in your filmmaking career?

Great question. I have had a fascination with the supernatural since I was a child. My grandmother was very psychic. Her and her two sisters were often at the local spiritualist church. For me the biggest question for any story is why are we here? That's probably my desire to know what makes everything tick, hence my interest in other worldly stories. The Lossen brings together the natural and the supernatural worlds. It's asking us to consider if there is something more powerful happening in our lives. The knife crime film "Last Licks" is really a ghost story, not what the commissioning editors expected for that subject. In a way I feel the supernatural will define my work even more as I continue on my film making journey.

Is The Lossen the first film you've written & directed? If so, was there any difficulty in your transition as a first time filmmaker?

The Lossen isn't my first film as a writer / director. Looking back the most difficult aspect of moving into writing and directing is getting people to understand what you're attempting to do with the film. I've always been very visual and often it's not always easy to ensure cast and crew and investors see the vision in your head. It's important to work diligently to make sure you express that vision effectively. There are a lot of visual effects in The Lossen, that's the first time I've directed a film with VFX. It was a massive learning curve which I found frustrating at times as I could see the idea in my head but getting that onto the screen took patience and the endurance of the visual effects team.

Are there any particular filmmakers or films that have inspired you throughout your career thus far?

I enjoy films with a dark humour and films that get under the skin, especially when things are not what they seem. Some of my favourite directors are Stanley Kubrick, Alfred Hitchcock and Guillermo del Toro. Favourite films include Dr Strangelove, Pan's Labyrinth, Rear Window, The Shape of Water and Withnail and I. I am inspired by films that are multi-layered where the subtext takes us in a different direction to the conscious direction of the story.



Some of our submitters are filmmakers and writers who have just began their journey into the industry. If you had to give a little bit of advice on the first steps, what would they be?

Keep making films; the more you do it the more you learn. You can make films reasonably cheaply with the technology we have today. I started making my own films from the age of 14. I had the theory that the more people who were in it or involved, the more people would pay to come and see it. The more I kept making films the more I learned. I started on Super 8mm and that means you have to be disciplined. If you can shoot something on film you learn a lot, particularly not to over shoot. That brings in an element of discipline which is important when you have deadlines and a budget to adhere to. Getting a job in the industry say as a runner is a good starting point but keep making your own films. This industry works on people being highly professional. Someone once said to me "if you can't live without doing it then you must do it" If you want to write then it's a good idea to study the structure of films. There's plenty of learning material out there. I did Robert McKee's Story Structure course in London. It was an intensive 3 days and I learned so much in a short time. It set me on the road. One of the key pieces of advice Robert McKee gave was that the last 25% of the effort of writing a script is the dialogue. It really resonated with me. If you don't know your characters well enough how can you ever know what they will say. I always act out my characters, thankfully in my own space with no cameras on me or people watching.

Are there any future projects in the works that we could expect to see soon?

The plan is to produce more Lossen films. I am working on the script for the next one. It follows on straight after this one. There's a little insight at the end of The Lossen. I also have a screenplay which is an epic tale with a supernatural undertone, of course. We will be working towards getting that into production and hopefully The Lossen and the follow ups will lead the way.



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