Written by Jamie Ruby
Wednesday, 27 February 2013 21:07

In the upcoming film *The Host*, based on the book by Stephenie Meyer (*The Twlight Saga*), a race of aliens have taken over the earth by taking over people's minds, but not everyone is willing to give up so easily. One "soul," Wanderer (a.k.a. Wanda) takes over Melanie Stryder (played by Saoirse Ronan), but she refuses to let go and they form a bond over the love (Max Irons) she left behind. As Wanda starts to share many of Melanie's feelings and emotions, her views change, and she decides to aid other humans who remain, in their fight against her kind.

One of these remaining humans is the character of Wes, played by Shawn Carter Peterson, who recently talked to Jamie Ruby of SciFi Vision in an exclusive interview about the film. "Wes is one of a group of human beings that remain on Earth once the earth has been taken over by an alien invasion, if you will. And the aliens take over human bodies so you can't really tell who's human and who's not. The only way you can tell is by a silver ring that's around the cornea of the eye. And there is a small group of humans that have remained human and are hiding out in caves out in the desert, and Wes is one of those people."

Photo © Naoe

He finds himself similar to Wes in certain ways. "Wes is similar to me in that he's one of those guys in the group that makes sure he has everybody's back. He starts out not really liking [Wanda], but he warms up to her pretty quickly. He's one of the ones to do that earlier on in the book and in the movie. And I kind of have a soft spot for people, so I was able to relate to that."

The actor got the role in the film by auditioning. "I put myself on tape for one of my representatives and I auditioned for one of the two leads, actually, the Kyle character. And then they liked my audition and they asked me to come in to meet with Andrew Niccol and the casting director, and they were considering me for Wes. So I went in and got to do it live and memorized for them, and got the job."

Part of the reason he went after the audition was because of Meyer. "It was like a big chance to be a part of something huge, to be a part of the Stephenie Meyer family. So it did put little extra funk on it, if you will."

There is a great possibility because of the success of the *Twilight* franchise that the film could be huge. Peterson will just take it as it comes. "I don't know if one can ever really be prepared for something like that. Because you don't want to be like "Oh, it's going to be like *Twilight*," and get your hopes up. At the same time, you do realize that it is going to put you in a different echelon than you might have been existing. You just take a deep breath and say, "I'm open to whatever comes and hopefully it will all be the best." "

He does not believe that the film is geared as much specifically towards a young female audience like the *Twilight* films were. "I would say it's more for the teenage girls who have now grown up and they are about five or six years older. So it's more of an adult film. The love story thing is still there, but it's a little more adult. It's still catering to the same audience, but the audience has grown and Stephenie is growing with them."

Peterson got to meet Meyer during filming. "She was on set. And Stephenie is one cool chick, I'll tell you that. You get a little worried, and some of the crew people were like "Oh my God, Stephenie Meyer's here and she's so distant." She was so not distant at all, she was so cool. We laughed and cajoled each other and it was awesome. It was great to know I was working with someone who is as cool as she is."

The actor read *The Host* while filming. "I read the book during the shoot, because it was a nice long shoot so I had a little time to get down with it."

The book is more geared to a female audience, but he still liked it. "I did enjoy it. It could be seen as a girls' book but it's still sci-fi, so I still had some fun with it.

"...I've never read sci-fi before, so that was interesting. I've always seen sci-fi films but I had never read one, so that was a "new experience," if you will. But Stephenie Meyer's writing is really, really vivid so it lends itself to being a film. So it was good to read it and be like "OK, so this is how it's going to go." And then it was a little different, I can't tell you how different it is, but there was some artistic license - cinematic license."

Of course, however, the film does have a lot of similarities. In the book and the film Wes is romantically involved with Lily (Raeden Greer). "Wes and Lily are still together; they're still very close. The film definitely will focus more on Jared, Jake Abel's character (Ian), and on Saiorse Ronan's character, Wanda, as well, than Wes and Lily. But we're still a couple, we're still together and we're still really tight."

Peterson couldn't reveal his absolute favorite scene, but he did talk about his next favorite. "I can tell you my second favorite scene to film, which was a rescue scene that I did with Jake Abel. We were rescuing Boyd Holbrook's character (Kyle), he was with Saiorse. And there's a big, huge underground river that they built, which was pretty, pretty awesome. And when it was time to get it shot they rushed thousands and thousands of gallons of water.

"...That was a lot of fun. It was really stressful because you're dealing with pads, and you're dealing with hard ground, and you're dealing with running water. And you don't want to drown anybody; you don't want to hurt anybody. You don't want to do that on such a big project like that. And there were a couple scratches that were received that I'd given to one or two people and I felt really bad about that. But they seemed to see them as battle scars, so they were okay

with that."

There were some other stunts and effects that Peterson was a part of. "Most of the visuals that we had were pretty much in [line] with stunt cars and stunt motorcycles and helicopters, et cetera. That stuff looked pretty much the way it was going to look in the movie, which kind of made us realize – you forget that it's all a big deal, you just get up and go to work for a seven o'clock call, you forget that you're shooting a major motion picture. So when stunt cars and stuff arrived it was like, "Wow, this is pretty spectacular; I'm a part of something big." And it's pretty, pretty dope."

Peterson feels that the time devoted to retakes wasn't excessive. "Film take a lot longer [compared to television] because there's so many other factors, but we didn't do that many takes it didn't seem. Once we got it set up and running, after a couple of rehearsals and camera rehearsals, it seemed like once we got it right, we got it right. In general it wasn't that many takes, sometimes it would be a little longer depending on the technicality of the actual shot.

"[The] underwater river scene took a little while because we had to make sure that people were rigged up properly and when they were flailing about you could still their face. Stuff like that that was highly technical took a little longer, but in general it was pretty good."

The actor did not do much improvisation in *The Host*. "I got to add in a couple lines. Andrew Niccol was pretty strict with the lines but he was generous if you requested, you know, "Can I get a couple in here?" Or he might say, "throw this in there," or "throw that in there." But they were pretty much on book, for the most part. And if there were things thrown in, you could pose the question and he was usually pretty generous with that."

The actor enjoyed working with the cast on the film, including the lead, Ronan. "Saiorse Ronan, she was the baby of the group because she's only 18 now I think. She's known for the movie *H anna*
and she was nominated for an Oscar a couple of years ago. She is the consummate professional. She has to carry the film, pretty much, because she's the lead and she always knew her stuff. She was always on point. And there's something to be said for having a really great work ethic.

"Both of her parents were around, if it wasn't both of them, at least one of them was always around. And they were very supportive, but they gave her space enough to do her work.

"And I think that she was a lot of fun. To work with someone who's 17 or 18 years old, she's still a kid, and that made us all relax a little bit because you're working with a little sister, if you will. She was just a hell of a lot of fun to be around and it made things that much better. So anytime anything was kind of stressful, she would say something cute and fun and you had to laugh. It let off some of the steam, which I think is important."

Peterson also spent time with other members of the cast. "I actually got really close with Boyd Holbrook, who's really, really cool. He and I were really cool.

FROM STEPHENIE MEYER THE AUTHOR OF THE TWILIGHT SAGA
CHOOSE TO BELIEVE.
CHOOSE TO FIGHT. CHOOSE TO LOVE.
THE
HOST
WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN AND DIRECTED BY ANDREW NICCOL
03.29.13