#### **QUESTIONS FOR Alexander DiPersia:**

What was the audition process like?

What attracted you to do this film?

Working with James Wan, who's definitely making a name in the horror genre, how much was he a part of the creative process and his involvement?

You've done a lot of television: *90210, Single Ladies, Good Girls Revolt.* Which do you prefer: television or film? What are the challenges you face with television compared to film?

What's it like to do horror vs a *natural* dramatic role?

You just attended your first Comic Con in San Diego where they had a screening of Lights Out. What was that experience like?

What was it like playing opposite two strong female actresses/characters with Maria Bello and Teresa Palmer?

Describe how you view your character, because to me, while we had two strong females, Bret was also very strong and not your typical boyfriend character.

There was a lot of wiring/stunts in this film. Did you do your own stunts? What was that filming process like?

I read that the lighting was as practical as it could be. Can you describe it for us from your perspective? Did you ever get scared yourself?

Do you believe in ghosts/spirits?

Do you believe Teresa's story about growing up in a haunted house and now living in one?

What direction did David give you guys?

How have you responded to the feedback of the film so far? It exceeded box office projections.

Test audiences didn't like Diana coming back to scare Bret and the family. Would you want a second *Lights Out*? If so do you think it could work with the same cast?

Had you seen the short film?

What's your favorite horror film?

What was it like working with Gabriel who's making quite a name for himself in the horror genre?

What reaction do you want people to have when they see Bret leave? Do you want them to feel like he abandoned the family or that he's too good a guy and he's getting help?

For me, I knew the police was coming because of trailers, do you think the marketing did justice to film? Did it spoil that moment?

What do you find special about this movie? It doesn't rely on jump scares.

Can you tell us about any upcoming projects fans can look forward to?

Not that our research comes from Wikipedia, but I did look at it and it states that you are an "active member of the New York art world as a collector, curator, and an advisor. You build collections and focus on interior design as it relates to the art for clients. You have worked for lobbies in New York as well as the permanent collection for the new buildings in New York's Hudson Yards." One, is this true? Second, if so, describe that in more detail.

## @alexdipersia

### **LIGHTS OUT (2016)**

- Released July 22, 2016
- 81 minutes
- 4.5 million dollar budget
- David F. Sandberg directed
- Rated PG-13 for terror throughout, violence including disturbing images, some thematic material and brief drug content
- Warner Bros. distributed

#### QUICK THOUGHTS:

- PHIL
- MARISA

## **DEVELOPMENT**

- "I've had that happen a lot, when you turn off the lights at home and you think you see like a shadow, or someone standing there, and you have to turn it back on"
- "It's nothing, but you think, 'Hmm, what if there actually was something in the dark every time you turned off the lights?"
- Started off as short film
  - o Sandberg and his wife, Lotta Losten, shot a 2 min horror short
  - They had no budget to speak of, used their Gothenburg apartment as a set and Losten herself as the star, and built a camera dolly with lights, rubber, and wood from (naturally) IKEA
  - Sandberg created the on screen special effects using Photoshop
- Sandberg entered the short in Britain's Bloody Cuts Horror Challenge. It didn't win it wasn't even a finalist but Sandberg was named Best Director
- The short went viral on Vimeo, YouTube, and other video platforms, racking up more than 20 million views
  - "It was insane how much attention a two-and-a-half-minute short could get," he
    recalled. "I had to make a spreadsheet of everyone I talked to just to keep track
    of everyone and what everyone was saying."
- Lawrence Grey, a former Fox Searchlight executive who has since produced films like Hope Springs and Last Vegas and discovered the short film on Reddit in early 2015

- "It was one of those things that just blew me away," said Grey. "I watched it in my office during the day on a bright and sunny L.A. morning I shouldn't be scared at all. But I jumped every time. I went to bed that night seeing that thing in my dreams."
- Grey and Sandberg hit it off and started workshopping the concept, based on the premise of an adult having an imaginary friend, who turns out to be the spirit going bump in the night
- Grey also had the perfect collaborator in mind horror hitmaker James Wan
  - The two had known each other since the early '00s, when Grey attempted to bring the then unknown Wan into the Searchlight fold for a micro-budgeted film he wanted to make called Saw
- Wan had seen the short, and while he was skeptical Sandberg could make the jump to a feature film, he was impressed by the treatment they created
  - "What I really liked about it was the simplicity of the concept. The idea is very universal: people afraid of the dark."
- Wan said one of the reasons he launched Atomic Monster was so he could give young genre filmmakers the tools they needed to make names for themselves. "I'm very thankful for the opportunity I had starting off, and I want to do the same. I'm not going to give [them] a lot of money, but what I think it does is it allows them to be very creative as a new, upcoming filmmaker."

# **ABOUT THE SHORT FILM:** (David F. Sandberg & Actress Lotta Losten)

- Shot for a contest in Sweden. Shot it in an evening. No intention for a feature.
- "What's the scariest thing we can do in an apartment? What if there actually was something standing there in the dark?" Sandberg
- Mental illness, depression. "In a way a sort of darkness as well within people."
- Diana name: "First idea was that Diana was more of a demon. So that it was that the boy
  misheard the name 'Dion' more demonic sounding and misheard it into Diana. As we
  developed the story with James [Wan] he felt that instead of a demon it should be more
  of a ghostly creature. Someone who was alive and actually knew the mother to create
  the bond between the mom and the antagonist. Make it more personal."

#### WRITING

- Grey recruited screenwriter Eric Heisserer (who wrote the *Thing* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* remakes) to pen the feature version
- Sandberg, who has suffered from clinical depression, said he wanted to make a movie about mental illness. "You lose your mind and any kind of horrors can be real," he said. "I think that's the scariest thing in the world."
- "The short didn't have a story," said Sandberg. "It was really just about the concept. "Now I had a chance to really think about the characters and building a story."

#### STORY/CAST

- The concept
- The rules of the world
- Diana as a villain
- The reveals
- Not using cheap jump scares
- Idea of the brother asking "if she's crazy, are we?"

- Two strong females, equally strong male
- Most horrific moment
- Ending (was it satisfying)

# TERESA PALMER (Rebecca)

- James Wan's idea to have Teresa
- Grew up on a "haunted house" (in Australia) and now owns a house in LA that's haunted (only in her room though)
- Teresa's mother suffered mental illness
- Teresa Palmer hadn't seen the design of Diana, until she filmed her first scene with her
  on a completely dark set. Alicia Vela Bailey, the women in the costume, was previously
  Palmer's stunt double on I Am Number Four (2011)
- Teresa Palmer's second horror film. The first was The Grudge 2, made 10 years earlier
- "So rare to find this in a horror film, that I'm rooting for this family, and I'm so taken by them. And then there's this scariest element that gets thrown in. Primal fear that we all have of the dark.. and I'm doing this movie." Palmer
- Slept with lights on for the first 13 years of her life
- About Alicia-Vela Bailey- "Seeing her as Diana I couldn't connect with her in that way anymore because she's behind this suit. She has these crazy contact lenses in. She's so scary to look at. So when she's in the scene I'm literally just afraid because I'm staring at her."

#### **GABRIEL BATEMAN** (Martin)

- Gabriel Bateman's second horror film to be produced by James Wan. He previously starred in Annabelle
- Gabriel Bateman is the youngest of 8 children, most of whom love creative arts

#### **ALEXANDER DIPERSIA** (Bret)

Alexander DiPersia as Bret, Rebecca's boyfriend

#### MARIA BELLO (Sophie)

- Enjoyed the family dynamic, dealing with family illness, children struggling with a mother
- Actually is bipolar- Able to access behavior. Knows what it was like to not be medicated. Used those experience to portray character
- Maria Bello ("A History of Violence"), who stars as the mother, Sophie, was cast a week into shooting

## **ALICIA VELA-BAILEY** (Diana)

- Diana was created with a photorealistic prosthetic suit. The designer of the suit previously created the title character of Mrs. Doubtfire (1993)
- She's also directly linked to Sophie's least stable periods, as if she were a physical manifestation of Sophie's downswings, dark days made literal
- Alicia Vela-Bailey has emerged from A list stunt double to on screen sensation. Whether it is her chilling performance as Diana in the smash hit "Lights Out" or her acrobatic, ass

- kicking, portrayal of Alisha Whitley on Marvel's Agents of Shield, it is clear Alicia Vela-Bailey truly is the human special effect
- Having two artistic parents, Vela-Bailey was enrolled in gymnastics and dance at a very young age and quickly climbed the ranks of the Hawaiian Island Twisters, becoming a competitive Level 9 Gymnast
- At age 21, Vela-Bailey auditioned to double for Milla Jovovich in the film "Ultraviolet," and subsequently spent four months in Hong Kong and two months in Shanghai doing stunts and martial arts for the film
- Being a huge fan of the horror genre, Vela-Bailey takes pride in scaring the "bejesus" out of people
- Her terrifying performances in "The Purge" as the Female Freak and the leather clad Cyber Punk in "Hostel 3" feature Vela-Bailey's unique ability to manipulate her body to create terrifying movement
- Blown away by Vela-Bailey's audition, they hired her on the spot and Vela-Bailey created the performance of Diana that had New York Times' Jeannette Catsoulis say "Lights Out delivers frights in old-school ways

#### **OTHER CAST**

- Emily Alyn Lind as Young Sophie
- Billy Burke as Paul, Sophie's husband and Martin's father
- Ava Cantrell as Young Diana
- Lotta Losten as Esther, Paul's assistant

#### EASTER EGGS/ SYMBOLS/COMPARISONS/ TRIVIA

- The mannequins in the basement were not brought in for the movie. It was already placed there by the owner of the house
- The basement of the house in which most of the filming took place mysteriously caught on fire few months after production wrapped
- During the opening sequence of the movie, a bobble head with a large smile across its face similar to the original monster design on the office bookshelf as a nod to the original 3-minute short
- The house in this movie is the same one used in Ouija (2014) and Ouija: Origin Of Evil (2016)
- On the wall in Rebecca's room, a poster reads "Släckt", which in Swedish translates to "Lights Out"

# **DIRECTING** (David F. Sandberg)

- First-time Swedish director
- Sandberg had been making animated shorts and working on documentary crews since 2006
- Was eager to break into horror
- Sandberg has already gone into production on another one of the studio's tentpole genre films, *Annabelle* 2, the sequel to the hit 2014 *Conjuring* spinoff that is currently shooting in Atlanta
- "It just went really fast and really smooth and people keep telling me, 'Don't get used to that. 'Because that's not usually how it happens."
- Decided to focus on practical effects and avoided as much CGI as possible

 "David had such a great gentle hand. Knew what he wanted but also didn't have a big ego about it.... Gave us [actors] a sense of comfort that we felt free to be the best of ourselves." - Bello

# PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY (Marc Spicer)

- Known for Furious 7 and as a cameraman for Fast 8, The Shallows, Son of the Mask
- Principal photography on the film began on June 29, 2015
- Filming wrapped on August 5, 2015
- Aimed to use as much authentic lighting for the film as possible and some scenes are only lit by candlelights or fluorescent tubes

#### WARDROBE/MAKE-UP

- Kristen M. Burke did custom design
- Kristin M. Burke is known for her work on The Conjuring (2013), Insidious (2010) and Insidious: Chapter 2 (2013)

#### **EDITING/VFX**

- Michel Aller & Kirk M. Morri edited
- Michel is known for Annabelle 2, The Boy Next Door, Drunk Wedding
- Kirk is known for Conjuring 2, Furious 7, Insidious 2, Piranha 3DD
- Lights Out is lean and concentrated, and it benefits from that spareness, this time in a different way

#### SOUND/MUSIC

- Benjamin Wallfisch composed
- Benjamin Wallfisch's work in film has earned him multiple awards and nominations, including two Ivor Novello Award Nominations for Best Original Film Score, a nomination in the 2009 Emmy Awards, three nominations as Discovery of The Year at the World Soundtrack Academy Awards and the 2013 Hollywood Music in Media Award for Best Original Score - Special Feature
- He made his scoring debut at the age of 24 (Dear Wendy), a score which earned him a nomination for 'Best Original Score' at the 2006 Danish Film Academy Awards
- Primarily works as a conductor/orchestrator for movies like Atonement, V for Vendetta,
   Robin Hood, Eat Pray Love, 12 Years a Slave

## **PROMOTION**

 The film was pushed from a winter to a summer release following positive audience reaction from test screenings

#### **BOX OFFICE**

- Domestic Summary (As of July 27th): \$27,650,149
  - Opening Weekend: \$\$21,688,103 (#3 rank, 2,818 theaters, \$7,696 average)
- Widest Release: 2,818 theaters
- Warner Bros. signed on to distribute, and Lights Out went into production with a \$4.5 million budget
- The film had its world premiere at the Los Angeles Film Festival on June 8, 2016

- The film also screened at Comic-Con on July 20, 2016
- As of July 26, 2016, Lights Out has grossed \$24.5 million in North America and \$8.5 million in other territories for a worldwide total of \$33 million, against a production budget of \$4.9 million
- In the United States and Canada, *Lights Out* opened on July 22, 2016, alongside *Star Trek Beyond* and *Ice Age: Collision Course*, and was projected to gross \$13–15 million from 2,900 theaters in its opening weekend
- Internationally, the film earned \$8.5 million in its opening weekend from 3,737 screens in key markets of Russia and Australia along with 30 smaller Eastern European and Asian markets
- The film benefited from being released in the wake of the global success of The Conjuring 2

#### RECEPTION

- Review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes gives the film an approval rating of 78%, based on 99 reviews, with an average rating of 6.4/10
  - The site's critical consensus reads, "Lights Out makes skillful use of sturdy genre tropes — and some terrific performances — for an unsettling, fright-filled experience that delivers superior chills without skimping on story."
- On Metacritic, the film has a score of 57 out of 100, based on 31 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews"
- Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B"
- Director David Sandberg revealed that in original test screenings, Diana returned after the death of Sophie to attack Rebecca, Bret, and Martin in a scene that occurred after the ambulance scene. After negative reaction, the scene was removed

SEQUEL/LEGACY

**FINAL THOUGHTS**