

Jason Momoa: You know him as Khal Drogo, but he's about to take on an iconic superhero

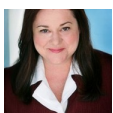
Part 2: Interview with Sara Timmins, Creative Director of Life Out Loud Films!



Life Out Loud Films

June 12, 2014

This is Part Two of the Exclusive Interview with Sara Elizabeth Timmins, actress, motivational speaker, the founder, creative director, and producer for **Life Out Loud Films in Virginia**. The last time we spoke, Sara was relaying her past history and inspirations, which led her to conceiving Life Out Loud Films. Now, she will discuss how establishing the production company came about, the films it has produced and her challenges, inspirations, and successes along the way. We will discuss her first short film, **Stockholm** and her recent award winning films, which include **Lake Effects** and **Wish You Well**.



Janet Fitzgerald
DC Independent Film Examiner

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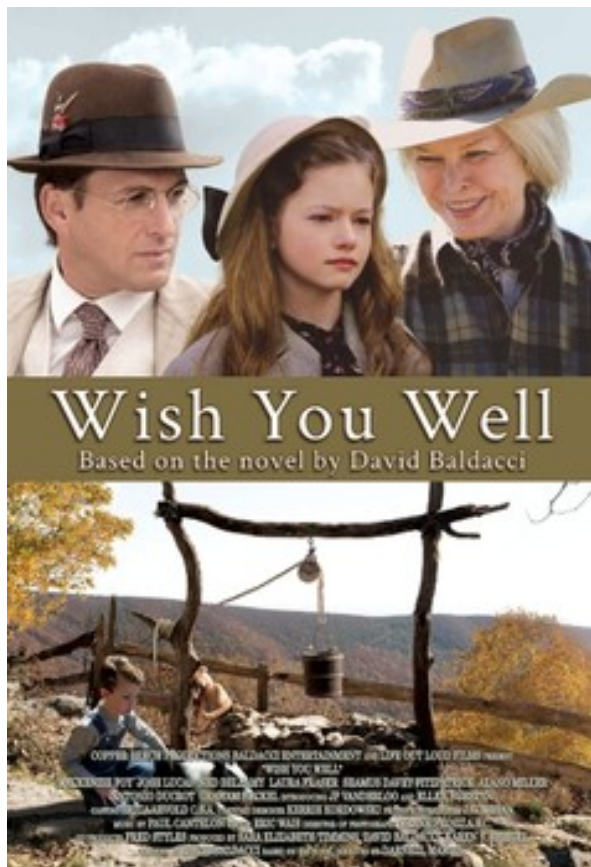


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David Baldacci, Sara Elizabeth Timmins

Let's first talk about your short film, Stockholm.

*I had worked on several projects in Los Angeles prior to moving back to Virginia and **Stockholm** was a short film that I did right before I decided to stop everything I was doing, and focus entirely on **Lake Effects**. **Stockholm** was complete in May of 2008 and the wrap party for the film was when I cemented the idea for the film with that team which would help create **Lake Effects**. In Film, usually everybody is working really hard, really long hours, and the wrap party is a celebration. It's sad usually, because it's the end of a really amazing family that you formed with all of these great people. You worked on an amazing creative project, but it also is really magical in the sense that you are on this high of okay, 'what's next?' That feeling was kind of part of the catapult that really, I think, launched us into **Lake Effects**. The director that I was working with on **Stockholm** directed **Lake Effects**. The Director of Photography (DP) on **Stockholm** came on and was the DP for **Lake Effects**.*

It's interesting how you can find the ties from one thing to the next.

Yes! I think it's all one long journey. In every project, you learn something. You become a stronger person. You make mistakes that hopefully you learn from. They all make

you who you are going into the next project. It's so important that you have those experiences, which is why I say I would never do anything different. I don't have any regrets, because I think that each situation made me stronger. Those experiences probably gave me the courage to keep going.

Can you speak about that epiphany you had about creating Life Out Loud Films, after filming Stockholm?

*I was walking by the lake near my parents' home in December, and I had this "Ah! ding-ding-Ding" moment. I thought, 'Here we go! Let's make it happen!' Let's make my own company so I can combine all these things that really I'm passionate about into one thing. It was freezing cold, but after this epiphany I went back and I got my dad's camcorder. I took it out to the lake and thought I could capture that moment. I literally went back on the walked path and took video of the water and barren trees. I was going to capture the moment that was significant to me. I mean it was really emotional and I was crying. I think that was the moment that was the catalyst for making a movie about Smith Mountain Lake. I went back to Los Angeles, stopped taking any work, because 'I'm going to start my own company and I don't want any distractions'. From that point, I set up my company, a website and began the process of taking that experience, that moment, and translating it into a film. **Lake Effects** came out of that experience. We actually did shoot the film at Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia. I had told my dad about my idea. Of course he didn't hear the "I'm going to eventually make a film". It was as if I was already making it right then, and he was telling everybody. People started volunteering, saying "I have a boat you can use." and "You can use my house", and "I'd be happy to help out in this way." All of the sudden, everybody was coming together to make it happen. This was the spirit I was missing in the producing I was doing back in Los Angeles.*

And?

I finished up a job that I already had and other obligations when I got back to L.A. It was in May of that year, I took a month off and started my production company. I had never done this before. People had always hired me, and I knew how to get things done on a set. [Laughter] Not start a company! It was really it was like starting all over. I have a friend, a marketing professional, who gave me some great advice. He said, 'Are you just making a film Sara or do you want to start a successful production company? You're putting a lot of

time into this. If you're starting a production company, then the way you go about making this first film is going to be key'. It made me stop, think, and forced me to have a plan. [Laughter] I researched and learned what I needed to deliver. I got my business plan, formed my LLC and I 'got all my ducks in a row' as I was doing it.

Lake Effects is a drama starring Jane Seymour. "After the loss of their father, two estranged sisters, one a high powered attorney and the other a small town girl, reunite with their mother at their enchanting family lake house where they grew up. They find that the secret to overcoming tragedy and rebuilding hope lies in their ability to look deeper at themselves."

Did you write the script for Lake Effects?

I did not. However, I wanted a script that reflected a lot of the emotional journey that I was on in that moment. The film is about a sister who's a big shot lawyer that is forced to go back to her hometown of Smith Mountain Lake, because her father died. There is the underlying theme of a 'big city' girl caught up in what she's doing and life. She doesn't really stop to enjoy the moment, and really reflect on what's right for her. It was a glimpse into what I was experiencing in my own life. At the time, I really wanted to identify what my purpose was and have a more purposeful and meaningful life. I wanted the film to really get rooted in what had become more important for me, which was the people, relationships, love, and family which is the general message in the film. We hired Scott Winters, to write the script, and it was a collaboration with Scott, I, and the Director Mike McKay. When we started, I thought, "we have our actors (An actor friend and I), we have our director, we have a script, and what else do you need? We're here, we got a camera, and we don't have to do this big time". We could raise maybe \$30,000 and we'll make this movie low budget, but it started getting bigger and bigger. I then brought the production team out so they could visit the lake. They really needed to know and understand this place that we were writing about.

In Lake Effects, there were some incredible actors that signed on for your film. How did you find them?

Erica Arvold *is an amazing cast director. She has nine years' experience in Chicago, and many years in Los Angeles, and she just happened to move back to Virginia. She thought she would retire, and then I teamed up with her. Erica had the relationships and know how*

in casting and we had a strong script to attract them. Talent wants to do something that they believe in. We ended up with wonderful talent, which we're very grateful for.

After *Lake Effects*, what happened next?

*Actually, we were literally raising the final funds, I knew that David Baldacci, a New York Times Best Selling Author, had a home at Smith Mountain Lake. David was on my radar, but I had never met him. He didn't live there full time but some people said I should talk to him. In our final stretch of fundraising, I got a phone call that I'll never forget. I was at the gym and David's assistant called and had read an article that the Laker Magazine had done about me and the film. She said, that David is really interested in what he saw and he'd like to see our investment material. I'm like, [Laughter] David Baldacci's assistant called me! That's crazy! So I sent all the materials, and still had not met David when he came on as an investor in **Lake Effects**. I was so honored that he believed enough to support the project. When **Lake Effects** was done, I still hadn't met David. He was in town one day, or one weekend, and said 'you know I'd love to meet and have dinner'. We went to dinner and it went so well, I think it was over three or four hours. We got along famously and had so much in common, our philosophies on how to make film were really in line. David was intrigued by the making of the film locally. It was then that I found out that this whole time that one of the reasons David was having dinner with me was to kind of audition me to see if I hit this goal. You hear of Hollywood movies with budgets in millions of dollars, and I'm making a film for less than a million? It was kind of a big deal. So this whole time, he was auditioning me, because he had his book, *Wish You Well*, which is very dear to his heart. He had spoken with several directors and could have had a film made in a much grander way, but it was important to him that it be done right. He sat on it for years and years, wanting to do it in Virginia, waiting for the right opportunities to come around. It all transpired after David and I sat down and met each other. I guess I passed the audition. [Laughter]*

Sounds like it.

*I passed, which is funny, because the whole time I'm thinking "Oh my gosh I'm going to meet with David Baldacci. Maybe I can do a film on one of his books." Sure enough, we got together and decided to make *Wish You Well*.*

Wish You Well is a drama based on the novel by David Baldacci, starring Ellen Burstyn, Mackenzie Foy, Josh Lucas. "After a family tragedy, a young girl moves from New York with her younger brother to live with their great grandmother on a Virginia farm. She becomes closer to understanding the land and roots that inspired her father's writings while discovering herself, the love of family, and the power of truly believing."

Where did you film **Wish You Well**?

It was in Giles County. Our cast and crew was staying at Mountain Lake, which is where Dirty Dancing was shot.

So tell me about, tell me about filming Wish You Well.

We were in a beautiful part of the country in the fall, but it was also a film of a lot of extremes. I remember one week, we were all in t-shirts and jeans and it was 70 degrees, and the following week Hurricane Sandy hit the east coast and the next thing we know there's a hurricane. We had to stop shooting early one day and let the crew go back to the hotel to evacuate the mountain that we were staying on because it was about to get slammed with deep snow. I don't know how many feet of snow that they were expecting but it was a lot. Power lines were going down and the next thing we know were in the middle of this horrible winter storm. Who would have thought we'd be affected by a hurricane sitting in Virginia. Actors were stuck in New York and couldn't get to Virginia so, we had to change our entire schedule because we didn't have our actors or location. Our location was obviously effected; you can't shoot outside when one day it was nice, and the next day there a foot of snow on the ground. The filming really taught me a lot on the producing end, because there was just about every crazy situation that you could have and we had to face them. Through all the challenges, it was an amazing learning experience and is a beautiful film.

That's incredible.

It was completed, a little less than a year ago. We went through the festival circuit, and our goal was to play at Heartland Film Festival, which is where we had our World Festival premier. We were very grateful to be accepted there. It's the top festival for our genre, which is an inspirational family film. We were also an Official Selection at the Sedona Film

Festival and were honored with the 'Audience Choice Award' for 'Best Feature Film Drama'.

Congratulations!

Thank you. I usually sit in the back of the theater so I can watch everybody. You can hear the audience laughing and crying in all the right places and then some. It's that moment of 'Wow! We did what we set out to do, which was to move an audience and have a story that spoke to people.' Really watching the finished product with the audience is my favorite part of that entire experience of film-making.

Read more about this inspiring film-maker and her community projects tied to each film next week in Part 3!