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THE DEEPER YOU DIG

CAST

John Adams Kurt

Toby Poser Ivy

Zelda Adams Echo

Shawn Wilson Dell

Joan Poser Mrs. Minskey

CREW

Written and Directed by **Toby Poser** and **John Adams**

Co-Directed by **Zelda Adams**

Produced by **Toby Poser**

Edited by **John Adams**

Directors of Photography **Zelda Adams** and **John Adams**

Special Visual and Makeup Effects by **Trey Lindsay**

Visual Effects and Makeup Assistant **Samantha Lindsay**

Music by **John Adams**





THE HATRED

CAST

Zelda Adams Hatred
John Adams Vengeance
Lulu Adams Righteousness
Thomas Burnham Barren
Mike Hall Sr. Sloth
Michael Hall Greed
Randall Jowers Lust
Dorino Lupinetti Gluttony
Billy Magee Pride
Billy M. Magee Envy
Damon McClain Upright
Stephen O'Donnell Judgement
Max Portman Faithless
Judy Rosen Betrayal
Harriet Wiser Virtuous

CREW

Written, Produced and Directed by **John Adams**
Consultant Producer **Blu de Golyer**
Edited by **John Adams**
Special Effects by **Michael Hall**
Music by **John Adams**



FAMILY MATTERS: THE DEEPER YOU DIG

by Neil Mitchell

Throughout the rich history of American cinema, a host of families have left indelible, iconic marks on Hollywood both onscreen and behind the scenes. From the Warners and the Barrymores to the Coppolas and the Fondas, to name just a handful, studios have been founded and movies have been produced, written, directed and starred in by various multi-talented blood-relatives. Whether collaborating on projects or pursuing their own careers, the combined filmmaking CVs of the aforementioned families alone have created some of the most enduring onscreen tales and lasting cinematic dynasties. However, you'd be hard pressed to find as intriguing a filmmaking family as the creative team behind the chilly, unsettling independent horror, *The Deeper You Dig*. Aside from a handful of supporting cast members and the assistance of Trey and Samantha Lindsay in the make-up and visual effects departments respectively, every other aspect of *The Deeper You Dig's* production was handled by a trio of family members. That this has been achieved while operating outside of the Hollywood system and armed with barely a fraction of the financial or showbiz clout makes it all the more fascinating and impressive.

John Adams, his wife Toby Poser and their youngest daughter, Zelda Adams, pooled their creative juices and technical skills together to shoot a movie that, in terms of narrative and visual impact, makes a mockery of the miniscule budget and 'cottage industry' trappings of its production history. Not only are the Adams' obviously multi-talented, they can also clearly multi-task with the best of them. Eagle-eyed viewers may well recognise Toby Poser's name and face from fleeting appearances in the likes of *Sex and the City* (1998-2004),

various strands of *Law & Order* (1990 – 2010) and off-Broadway stage roles, and those American viewers with finely tuned ears may also recognise her voice-over work from television commercials. Poser is, though, now creating altogether more satisfying ripples in the film industry for herself with the work being produced with her nearest and dearest.

Working under the banner Wonder Wheel Productions, the Adams family have been collaborating together on independently financed films since the release of their first feature, *Rumblestrips*, in 2012. That the film went on to become an award winner at the Berlin Independent Film Festival the following year was an early indication that the Adams' were more than a novelty act playing at making movies. This family meant business. Three further features, *Knuckle Jack* (2013), *The Shoot* (2014) and *Halfway to Zen* (2016) saw the creative team – which also occasionally includes eldest daughter Lulu – hone their collaborative approach, pick up further award wins and nominations and flirt with multiple genre stylings, while inquisitively exploring themes of dysfunctional families and broken individuals. Now a well-oiled filmmaking unit, the Adams' latest feature is their most technically accomplished and creatively daring production to date. Strong reviews by Marisa Mirabel for *Slash Film*, Dennis Harvey for *Variety* and Glenn Kenny for *RogerEbert.com* all highlighted *The Deeper You Dig's* intelligent script, emotional depth and the film-makers' willingness to experiment visually. That films such as *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), *Fargo* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1996) and *The Lovely Bones* (Peter Jackson, 2009) were all indicated in these reviews as emotional, thematic and aesthetic siblings of *The Deeper You Dig* places the movie and its makers in esteemed company. Further references to Edgar Allan Poe's influential short-story *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843) and Don Coscarelli's trippy cult-horror *Phantasm* (1979) expand upon the genre influences that are recalled by *The Deeper You Dig's* screenplay and its onscreen manifestation





whether consciously or unconsciously brought to bear by the Adams. It's also hard not to see residual traces of Bryan Forbes' undervalued 1964 British thriller *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* in terms of thematic elements and atmosphere, even if Forbes' movie doesn't enter into the fantastical territory explored in the Adams' film. *The Deeper You Dig's* more outré imagery – witnessed in dream sequences and hallucinatory episodes – would not seem out of place in the works of Alejandro Jodorowsky or Jan Svankmajer, two artists who underline the eclectic filmmaking touchstones recalled by the film's scripted narrative and its visual presentation.

In video interviews for the Fantasia Talkshow and Frightfest TV that were given in 2019 to promote the film's screenings at those respective film festivals, it is clear to see that the Adams have an easy and tight-knit way with each other, with living and working together in such close quarters on dark narrative themes a testament to the strong offscreen bonds they share. That the Adams willingly choose to return to the themes of dysfunctional families and the emotional and mental damage to individuals within them just adds another layer of intrigue and interest into the inner-workings of the offscreen family and the characters they portray. Both interviews also crystalize what must be the virtually unique working practices of the Adams; there can't be many production teams that discuss character motivation and how to shoot death scenes while on the way to football practice or cooking a family meal. In the Frightfest TV interview, John sums it up succinctly by stating that "on-set never stops because we are a family," a statement given added poignancy and context once the viewer is aware that *The deeper You Dig* was made while the Adams coped with the added strain of Toby being diagnosed with cancer. Rarely has the making of a movie provided such an intense avenue for catharsis, exploration and distraction, as Toby herself pointed out.

Now based in the Catskills in the Southeast of New York State, the Adams are blessed with a famously rugged and beautiful part of the world on their doorstep, one which has long attracted filmmakers and artists. Aware of the power of their surrounding environment, the Adams have used the striking physical terrain at their disposal to inform and heighten the emotional and mental landscapes traversed by *The Deeper You Dig's* three main characters. The Catskills' harsh winter climate has also been utilized as a seasonal indicator of the inner journeys embarked upon by the characters as the film's increasingly dark narrative plays out. Having previously incorporated elements of horror into the narrative of *The Shoot*, *The Deeper You Dig* sees the Adams moving fully into the genre, experimenting with as many of its associated tropes as they adhere to. A movie concerned with loss, guilt and grief built around a secret that refuses to fade away, *The Deeper You Dig* sees Ivy (Toby Poser), a latent psychic scamming a living as a Tarot card reader, become increasingly convinced that her new, furtive neighbor, Kurt (John Adams), knows more about the disappearance of Ivy's headstrong daughter, Echo (Zelda Adams), than he admits to. Grim reality collides with spirituality and occultism as the lives of Ivy, Echo and Kurt become intertwined during a fateful meeting between the latter pair on a bleak, wintry night early on in *The Deeper You Dig*. Kurt's initially instinctive and then coldly measured actions in covering up what takes place provides the narrative catalyst for the events that come to pass.

That Ivy's missing-presumed-dead daughter is – somewhat unusually – called Echo comes to be symbolically profound as her subsequent presence/absence reverberates around Ivy and Kurt's physical, mental and emotional spaces as the boundaries between life and death begin to blur. Though Echo is an overtly signposted name, Ivy and Kurt are also nomenclatures within the movie's narrative. Derived from the old English word ifig in relation to the climbing plant, Ivy is seen to represent faithfulness and fidelity, and by her





actions Echo's mother displays an undying devotion to her daughter. While the name Kurt is of Germanic origin, the Turkish surname Kurt translates as 'wolf', and with 'worm' another meaning attributed to the name it becomes evident how John Adams' character is placed within the narrative. From its ominous opening scenes to its unhinged climax, *The Deeper You Dig* is a carefully controlled tale that smoothly utilizes its various stylistic elements and genre-tropes rather than letting them become distracting or dominant forces. Jump scares, explicit gore and supernatural effects combine with sharp editing, evocative sound design and a discordant score that is used sparingly and with purpose to create an atmospheric, hermetically sealed world where Ivy and Kurt become enveloped by the presence of Echo, as ramifications of Kurt's actions threaten to destroy them both.

Subsequent to the life-changing collision of Echo and Kurt's lives, her presence is disconcertingly felt first by auditory interference to a radio within the dilapidated house that the latter has purchased to fix up and sell on for profit. Aware that unnatural occurrences are beginning to plague him, Kurt's renovation work takes on a metaphorical quality as walls are stripped, floorboards pulled up and rubble accumulates as he digs himself deeper into the consequences of his actions. Occult symbols, psychic powers and karmic retribution drive the tale on as Ivy conducts her own, increasingly fantastical, investigation into Echo's fate while tapping into the otherworldly talents she has hitherto lost touch with. Warned by a former psychic protégé that "every gift comes with its own twisted curse," Ivy's single-minded pursuit of the truth impacts on Kurt, and Echo, in ways that none of them could have imagined on the stormy winter's night when their lives initially changed forever. To the Adams' credit, *The Deeper You Dig's* very real themes of overwhelming emotions, mental dysfunction and grief and guilt are in no way undermined by the narrative's exploration of them through occultism,

spiritualism and the supernatural. The sense of mounting dread and the off-kilter atmosphere in the film are aided by expressive camerawork throughout and sporadic instances of highly striking mise-en-scene that accentuate the potentially disruptive collision of verisimilitude and fantasy while never allowing them to feel jarring.

If you're looking for a film that both shows what can be achieved by independent filmmakers working on small budgets while evidently enjoying experimenting with tone, genre and style, then *The Deeper You Dig* will tick those boxes. More satisfying than any number of big-budget genre outings, and instilled with a genuine interest in the underlying emotional states experienced by the characters, the Adams' foray into the horror genre should attract viewers to their previous non-horror outings while giving the genre's more established names something to think about in terms of delivering on ideas. Sometimes it takes those coming from outside of an established genre to shine a light onto its more moribund aspects and breathe new life into familiar tales, and with *The Deeper You Dig* the Adams family have done just that.

Neil Mitchell is a writer and editor based in Brighton, East Sussex. He is the author of Devil's Advocates: Carrie for Auteur Publishing and the editor of the London, Melbourne and Sydney editions of Intellect Books' World Film Locations series.









ABOUT THE TRANSFERS

The Deeper You Dig and *The Hatred* are presented in their original 1.78:1 aspect ratio with 2.0 stereo sound. The High Definition masters were provided by Wonder Wheel Productions.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Michael Mackenzie**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**

Associated Producer **Mike Hewitt**

Technical Producer **James White**

Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**

QC **Alan Simmons**

Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**

Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**

Artwork & Design **Oink Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, John Adams, Zelda Adams, Anton Bitel, Trey Lindsay,
Neil Mitchell, Toby Poser, Ian Rattray, Jonathan Zaurin



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