



Nate Taylor Takes us behind-the-scenes of the haunting thriller *Forgetting the Girl*

Haunted by a traumatic history, photographer Kevin Wolfe (Christopher Denham (<http://movieweb.com/person/christopher-denham/>)) struggles to systematically forget all of his bad memories, but erasing his past threatens to consume his future. Kevin is obsessed with finding a girl who can help him forget his unpleasant childhood. However, all his encounters with the opposite sex inevitably go awoul, creating more awkward experiences than he can cope with. As the rejections mount, Kevin's futile search for happiness and love becomes overwhelmingly turbulent, forcing him to take desperate measures.

Shot in a variety of NYC locales, from Hell's Kitchen to Greenpoint, *Forgetting the Girl* (<http://movieweb.com/movie/forgetting-the-girl/>) is a gritty vision of the city and its denizens. The tightly woven drama blends recollections with reality to craft an intense character study of the psychologically scarred protagonist. As beautiful as it is dark, the tense narrative slowly boils under the surface until it unleashes an unsettling climax that will not be easily forgotten.

We recently caught up with director Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>) to chat about the film, which will be screening at Worldfest (<http://www.worldfest.org/>) in Houston, Texas on April 15th at 9pm (to buy a ticket: [CLICK HERE](http://worldfest-houston.ticketleap.com/forgetting-the-girl/) (<http://worldfest-houston.ticketleap.com/forgetting-the-girl/>)). The film will then move to the SoHo International Film Festival (<http://www.siffnyc.net/>) in NYC for two showings. The April 16th screening is sold out, but tickets are still available for the April 17th screening (to buy tickets: [CLICK HERE](http://tickets.landmarktheatres.com/Ticketing.aspx?TheatreID=256&MovieID=13564&ShowDate=4/17/2012&ScheduleID=80174) (<http://tickets.landmarktheatres.com/Ticketing.aspx?TheatreID=256&MovieID=13564&ShowDate=4/17/2012&ScheduleID=80174>)).

Here is our conversation.

After reading the synopsis, and then watching the movie, there is not a whole lot we can really delve into here without giving everything away.

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): That has been the challenge and the curse across the boards. How do you talk about this movie without ruining it for people?

It's not like the *Sixth Sense*. It doesn't necessarily have a twist ending. It's just that every moment plays on top of the next, and you really can't hint at too much of it without the whole thing unraveling.

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): Letting the movie take you on the journey without giving you too many expectations...You need to view the experience without knowing too much about it. But how do you get people to sit down? It's a no name director, a no name movie, with relatively unknown actors...How do you ever get people to sit down and enjoy that journey when there is no reason too?

People always need a reason to see a movie, especially nowadays. Most people don't like to jump into the water cold. It has to be incredibly hard to come at this from a marketing standpoint.

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): Yeah. It has been a huge challenge to figure out how to position it. I want viewers to enjoy it. You need to set their expectations in the right place, so they can enjoy it. It's hard to figure out how much to tell them, or even what to tell them, so that they can sit down and surrender to the film, and see where it takes them.

When I read the synopsis, the first thing that came to my mind was *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. *Forgetting the Girl* isn't actually anything like that movie in any way.

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): No. It's grounded in reality, as opposed to *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (<http://movieweb.com/movie/eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind/>), which I love. That weaves in surreal, otherworldly ideas. We've had people think this was going to be *Memento* (<http://movieweb.com/movie/memento/>). We've had people think it was going to be *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (<http://movieweb.com/movie/eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind/>). There is one other film people compare it too before they see it. They don't know what they're getting into.

Christopher Denham, your lead actor, is kind of creepy throughout the film. Once we get a sense of where the story is headed, we can't help but think he might be...Should I say...Disturbed? As an audience member, I wasn't on his side, even though he is our lead character. How did you and Christopher build that persona in order to keep us guessing? He certainly isn't your average leading man...

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): I was so blessed to have Christopher Denham (<http://movieweb.com/person/christopher-denham/>) on board. He is so immensely talented. He is effortless when he works. This wasn't an effortless movie. We were doing five and a quarter pages a day. And he is on camera 80% of the time. He had to breeze through pages of script every day, and you don't see that rush on screen. He is just so in it. What we did...We did two weeks of rehearsal. That really saved this movie. It allowed everyone to be really relaxed and comfortable. It got us into a creative place. We could discuss what we wanted to accomplish and get everyone on the same page. We spent a couple of days working through the whole arc of this thing. You are trying to find the right amount of creepiness, and a little bit of darkness. We wanted to get just a little under the surface. Something is amiss, something is a little unsettling. He needed to have a hint of an unsettling tone, so that the audience could sense that something is off. Then, we used the other characters in the film to be the red herrings. If you are unsettled, you can blame it on Tanner, or you can blame it on Jamie. At the end, it all makes sense. Something has been weird and now it all makes sense. So we had to balance his performance to get the right amount of weirdness from him. We did go through some range on the crucial takes. We'd push it a little further, then, in the edit, we'd figure out how dark we wanted to get. We seeded in little bits of darkness along the way, until we had just the right amount to bring you through. But not enough to tip your hand. Some people pick up on it right out of the gate. The very first scene is pretty creepy, depending on what you read into it. Christopher (<http://movieweb.com/person/christopher-denham/>) has this relaxed, open way about his character. You sometimes write off anything that might be creepy as awkward. Because he is very approachable.

For me, it was this desperation in his approach to dealing with the girls. When you reach that point, where he seems so needy, in a way...It reads as creepy. But then you have the Jamie character. And she is bonkers right out of the gate. So you never can tell which way the story is going to turn, until it turns ugly.

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): Totally. His desperation...I was trying to channel what I was like in my late twenties. You are desperate to find someone. To find a mate. To find that person that is going to complete you. You are out in the city, and it's the worst place in the world to try and meet people, and find love. Everything is moving at such a fast pace. You end up breathing this weird sigh of desperation. At least, that's how it worked for me...In my twenties...

It's not an easy path to the film's conclusion...

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): No, there were a lot of easier routes to the film's ending. I think we twisted it all down. It could have become a full-blown bloodbath. But we toned it down. A lot of that is Peter Moore Smith (<http://movieweb.com/person/peter-moore-smith/>)'s script. He is a smart, twisted cookie.

How did you find the script, and what was your relationship with Peter before you set out on this crazy venture?

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): We worked together in advertising. I edited a bunch of commercials that he had written. We were working together on a spot for Fed-Ex at the time. I showed him a couple of spec commercials that I shot. He goes, "It looks like you can do a lot with a little. I have a script that I wrote, that I think you'd dig, that you could probably do for very little cash." So I read it. I loved it. Immediately, I told him, "Yeah, we can do this for nothing." And then it ended up costing us some money...I was nervous at first...He wrote it in the mid-90s, or late 90s...He had it kicking around for a while. I was worried that he'd have a lot of baggage with it. That he wasn't ready to let it go. Some writers can be really territorial. It proved to be the opposite. He was the best collaborator to work with ever. We'd already done a bunch of commercial projects together, so we knew how each other worked. We trusted each other. And he was really open to any script tweaks or suggestions. He was open to the actors coming up with stuff. He'd either say, "That is a really good idea." Or, "It doesn't work because of X, Y, and Z." It was like he'd already thought of it and he had a reason. We built a rough cut. We messed around with it a whole bunch. We ended up rearranging the order of the script, and we cut a lot of stuff out. We moved it around. By the time we had a cut that was really working, it was a lot different from how the script was originally structured. I was nervous at first to show it to Peter (<http://movieweb.com/person/peter-moore-smith/>). I thought he might be upset, "Oh, you took out my favorite line! You changed the order!" It was just not that at all. He embraced it. He thought the flow we built worked for the story. He said, "Cut everything out. I don't even care! Whatever needs to happen to make this thing work? Just keep cooking!" So, he was really fantastic. He was also merciless. He'd look at some stuff and go, "Why is that even in there? That is terrible? I shouldn't have written that!" He wasn't afraid to kill his own darlings. He gave us great feedback during the rough-cut process.

We haven't ever really seen a character in a recent movie that does headshots for a living. As a director...Is sorting through headshots something that fascinates you?

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): What's interesting about advertising, which is very opposite from film, is everything is completely surface. There is no subtext in a thirty second commercial. What you see is what you get. So everyone is obsessed with appearance, and what it looks like on the surface. These people, and these headshots...They are not at all who they appear to be. That is just their image, and they tend to be different people than what you thought you'd end up with. There is that interesting disconnect between what you want...The perfect image and the reality is always completely different. What I liked in general is that the film looked at this in a big picture way. It played with your stereotypes and your misconceptions. The sleazy guy downstairs who you think is up to no good is the only person that finds happiness in the whole film. Then the nice guy upstairs becomes the creepiest of them all. We flipped a lot of preconceptions on their head. We let the viewers' preconceptions about people work against them. To keep them off the trail of who was actually in trouble in this thing.

Your lead character is looking to forget certain things in his past. Yet, you make him a photographer. Photos really contain and preserve all memories. So, it's interesting that you give him this contradiction...

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): Without giving it away is the hardest part of all of this...There is this idea that the character is chasing this one moment. This will ruin the ending...

Major Spoiler!

But Kevin wants to remember the moment his sister drowned. Seeing the life fleeing from her eyes. The intensity of emotion in that reality has been life changing for him. He has forever since been trying to capture this...It is something that is gone. It fled and it disappeared. So, ever since he has been chasing, and trying to capture, that same moment. That was the genesis of his photography obsession. He thought he could change the event by capturing it on film. Because it becomes different from when it actually happened. Now, all you see is this little record of it...I don't know if that answers your question...As soon as you try to capture the moment, you are no longer in the moment. If you are on vacation, and you are running around with our video camera, you are using your energy to capture the moment as opposed to spending your time being in the moment, experiencing it. It changes your reality. We talked about Kevin being displaced. Feeling like he is always watching, rather than participating. Voyeurism is a theme running through the whole movie, especially with the security camera shots. With Tanner watching...And us watching...

Kevin spends a lot of time talking about his dead sister. Wanting to know what she's be like now, if she were still alive. Yet he has no time for Jamie. He is irritated by her. He is passively not engaged by what she has to say. And I couldn't help thinking..."But what if this is what your sister would have been like had she grown up?" It was like, he was so consumed by the past, he couldn't see what he was refusing to focus on in the present. That one aspect made me not like Kevin...

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): He is pretty terrible to Jamie throughout the film. Which makes me sad. I love Jamie. I think his interactions with all girls, in all ways...He is chasing his sister and what could have been...Whether he realizes it or not. He is chasing that made-up reality. Part of it is...He is also obsessed with beauty and surface beauty as a photographer. I think he is writing Jamie off in his mind, because she is not falling into the classic beauty look. He is overlooking her.

Where do you go from here with the film?

Nate Taylor (<http://movieweb.com/person/nate-taylor/>): We are screening it in New York and Texas throughout April. Then, we will see who else will accept us. We have been rejected by a lot of festivals. I think its because they don't know how to position this film. Or what to do with it. The dream is that we will hopefully get some distribution and get it out there. The goal is to get people to see it!

For Worldfest (<http://www.worldfest.org/>) tickets on April 15th: [CLICK HERE \(http://worldfest-houston.ticketleap.com/forgetting-the-girl-/\)](http://worldfest-houston.ticketleap.com/forgetting-the-girl-/).

For SoHo International Film Festival (<http://www.siffnyc.net/>) tickets on April 17th: [CLICK HERE \(http://tickets.landmarktheatres.com/Ticketing.aspx?TheatreID=256&MovieID=13564&ShowDate=4/17/2012&ScheduleID=80174\)](http://tickets.landmarktheatres.com/Ticketing.aspx?TheatreID=256&MovieID=13564&ShowDate=4/17/2012&ScheduleID=80174)