

# DEVIL'S GATE Opens Up the Genre at the Tribeca Film Festival



*Devil's Gate* will give you splinters. It's a taut thriller with layered, underlying themes that never seems to be the movie you think it is at any moment you think you know.



Milo Ventimiglia as Jackson Pritchard

Texturally, the film looks like it will hurt if you get too close. The jabs this film offers aren't just in the peeling paint and parched landscape but in the gritty ways the characters interact and the story that unfolds with increasingly unexpected turns.

From its opening scene, it appears you've checked into a traditional horror movie, complete with a lost stranger on a solitary road and a creepy farmhouse. Horror tropes literally hang from every available beam. So when what you expect to happen next never materializes, it quickly becomes clear that this movie is already one step ahead. Technically listed as a Sci-Fi Thriller, it never lets you forget its horror heritage. In a movie world where *Scream* and *Cabin in the Woods* have deconstructed the genre, *Devil's Gate* uses these images to remind you and make you feel a certain way, but it relies on tight storytelling and fierce acting to tell its story and draw you in.



Bridget Regan, Shawn Ashmore and Amanda Schull

Most good movies in these genres have metaphorical meanings: the endless consumerism of the zombie, the red scare of the body snatcher, the fear of industrialism and automation of the stitched-together monster. The one behind *Devil's Gate* is the fear of the other, and Clay Staub, the director and co-writer, wastes no time in making Federal Agent Daria Francis (Amanda Schull) the subject of that fear. A wife and child (Bridget Regan and Spencer Drever) have gone missing in a small town. While all indicators point to the husband Jackson Pritchard (Milo Ventimiglia), relationships in this small town are so intertwined that Sheriff Gruenwell (Jonathan Frakes in a small role that will have you asking, "does he - is he?") and his deputy, Colt Salter (Shawn Ashmore) tell her to focus her energies anywhere else. She's the pushy outsider who doesn't understand him like they do. However, Agent Francis is not about to be cowed by the misogyny and distrust she encounters. She has a job to do, and that commitment is heavily colored by the outcome of her previous case.

It is in Agent Francis' backstory and soon her investigation where a main theme of *Devil's Gate* emerges: Every character is caged by their beliefs. At various points throughout the narrative, those psychological cages are opened and the characters are faced with freedom or the choice to withdraw. Shawn Ashmore's Deputy Salter shines in his moment when his naive, green lawman stops solely following instructions and chooses to do what he thinks is right - with spectacular consequences. Milo Ventimiglia gives Pritchard's cage a terrifying darkness touched with beautiful moments of tenderness and despair.

Agent Daria Francis is the hero of the story, and Amanda Schull brings her to life with conviction. Director Clay Staub revealed that the original script called for a male FBI agent, so it was refreshing to see Ms. Schull tackle another strong lead in a role typically given to a man. While

none of the characters ever let us forget that the bizarre circumstances have them frightened, they manage to hold onto their humanity. Yet no matter how frightened, no matter how bizarre the situation is, Agent Francis manages to maintain laser focus on her goal: to uncover the truth, consequences be damned.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8I0RY6Q2ww>

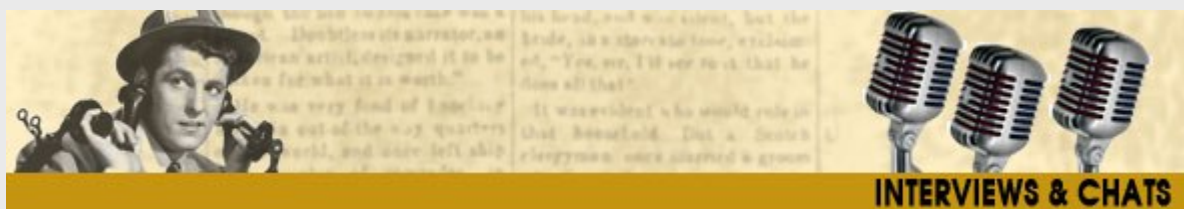
Devil's Gate is not a one-trick pony where the whole story is supported by a few twists. It thoroughly explores and tells a story with purposeful, sentient characters, while nodding thoughtfully to the genres that inspired it. If twisting, genre-bending films make you squeal with joy, then put Devil's Gate on your list of must-see movies this year.

[Follow @twitter](#)

[Follow @twitter](#)



## Interview: PRODIGY Is Classic Science Fiction Storytelling



*[images: Prodigy Film LLC]*

There is a very dangerous young girl inside a secret government facility, intelligent in a way that is both exhilarating and terrifying, and unless one man can find a way to reach her...



*Prodigy* is an independent feature film about what makes us human, and recalls - intentionally - the classic style of *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*. Just as those TV shows often told stories that were actually more about the characters than the science fiction frames they lived in, *PRODIGY* takes the viewer into a character study of two smart, damaged people whose conversations may be the death of both of them.

Alex Haughey - one of the two writer/directors of the film, alongside Brian Vidal - stopped by The Bunker before the Kansas City Filmfest last week, where he talked about the inspirations and processes behind making *Prodigy*. Covering everything from the crucial - and somewhat unexpected - casting of star Savannah Liles as the titular character, to where the film and its creators go next, after all the great festival response.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86xoDbnk6Kk>

Check out the trailer here:

*Prodigy* screens next on Monday, April 24th, at 8:15 PM at the RIVERSIDE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL in Riverside, CA.

For more info about the film, the cast and the crew: <http://www.prodigy-movie.com>



[Follow @twitter](#)

[Follow @twitter](#)

