



TV pilot episode filmed in Alton to be pitched to networks in L.A.

by Brittany Kohler, Content Manager
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Local businesses and area artists play big part in production of vampire horror pilot, The Town of Monroeville

ALTON - [Black Bat Productions](#) filmed a television pilot for a potential vampire horror series in Alton during mid-February of this year.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE "After 'Action' Discussion On Los Angeles Film Crew's Pilot Shoot Here In Alton" VIDEO](#)

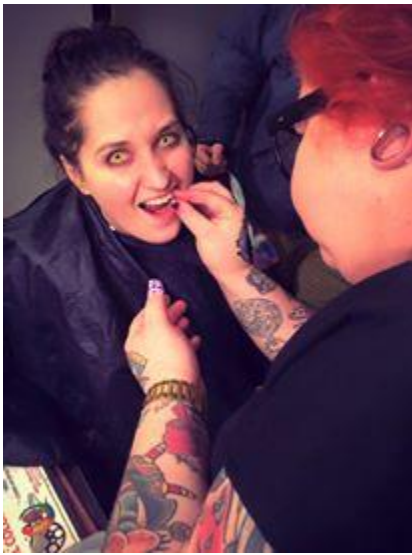
[The Town of Monroeville](#) started when Director [Kellie Marie McGhee](#) was 18 years old and began writing as a hobby. McGhee joined the Air Force after high school and used the G.I. Bill benefits to graduate with honors from the New York Film Academy in L.A.

There, McGhee became very close with [Mary Ma](#), the Cinematographer of Black Bat and Producer [Aya Long](#). Upon graduation, the three young women created Black Bat and *[The Town of Monroeville](#)* became their first project for the company.

The team wasted no time putting their heads together and following their dream. After much hard work and dedication, the vampire horror plot went from chapter to chapter, book to book and finally, screenplay to screenplay.

McGhee and Ma visited Alton in August to scout locations and get a visual of the scenery. They met with local business owners and locked in locations for set.

After the visit, motivation kicked in and the team kicked off their campaign to raise the funds to film. They began hosting castings and everything started coming together.



After casting the main characters in L.A., the team flew to St. Louis to cast local talent. L. Frost and Larissa White of St. Louis were casted to play Damon and Sadie. Local residents Kelsy Demond, Jesten Herndon, Anjie Baumgartner and myself, Brittany Kohler, played characters in the film.

“I absolutely loved playing a part in Monroeville,” said Anjie Baumgartner, a kindergarten teacher at Gilson Brown Elementary School in Godfrey. “I was nervous at first, but ended up really enjoying it. It was a ton of fun, the professional actors gave me a lot of guidance and made me feel very comfortable on set.”

[Riverbender.com Community Center](#) volunteers and others from the area also played extras in the film.

“I thought the local actors and actresses in the film did great, especially considering the fact that they had no experience in the acting field,” said Nancy Demond of Godfrey, mother of Kelsy, who plays Taylor in the episode. “Having locals in the film brought it more real to me. They are all born and raised in this little close-knit town and I believed that showed through.”

Many local business owners and people of the area were directly involved in the filming of the pilot. Alton Middle School, Schwegels, Cliffside Inn, Melville Dairy and even residents’ homes were used as locations in the film.

“It was complete organized chaos in my house when Black Bat was there,” said Beth Kohler, who has been directly involved in the film from the beginning. “There was people everywhere, wall-to-wall supplies, boxes full of equipment, wires strung throughout everywhere and food and stuff set out for the cast and crew. My living room was a walk-in closet, my kitchen turned into a hair and makeup studio; I couldn't even open my refrigerator. And you know what? I'd do it all again in a heartbeat, it was so much fun!”



The locals that were thrown into production seem to have all thoroughly enjoyed being part of something that not many people ever get the opportunity to experience. Several students and alumni from Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville were hired by BBP for crew members on the production to include a sound team, camera assistants and grips. Grips are known as the “muscle on set, the ones that move equipment, load and unload the supply truck, set up lights, etc.

“Besides the acting, I just liked watching all the work and all the moving parts behind the scenes,” said Anjie. “I watched these three ladies, Kellie, Mary and Aya, as they worked so diligently and was able to see their pure passion and determination for this project. It was simply amazing.”

With an exception of a few scenes filmed in St. Louis and Calhoun County, most of the pilot was filmed in Alton.

The cast and crew worked extremely long days and nights throughout the week to film the episode. From there, the footage was handed to an editor who will assemble and fine tune the final cut, making the story come together and flow elegantly for a viewing audience.

A private rough-cut showing was showcased at Riverbender.com Community Center to show those involved in the production the entire storyline and to get an idea of what the final product will look like. Only those involved in the film and their families were invited to view the final product.

“After viewing the rough-cut of the Town of Monroeville, I thought it was very good,” said Demond. “The intro was interesting enough to catch my attention and make me want to watch the rest. The end product was much more than I expected.”

The next step for Monroeville, after getting the pilot episode into the right hands post-production wise, would be to find an interested network or investor.



“It’s very difficult for a small group of females to sell something of this magnitude straight out of college,” said McGhee. “I’ve been working on getting an agent in order to help us get in with the appropriate networks.”

Another option for funding for the future of Monroeville is to find a private investor.

“I would prefer a private investor because it will allow me to maintain creative control,” said McGhee. “To do that, all we need is awareness, a lot of followers, people who are excited to see the show and then someone who likes the idea so much, he or she will be willing to invest their own money in order to see the story take off.”

At that point, the show would be independently funded and once season one is done being filmed, it’ll be much easier to sell. Networks and online streaming networks are much more eager to air a finished product.

Black Bat Productions plans to pitch the pilot around late June, early July. McGhee says that allows the perfect amount of time in post-production as well as getting together any other materials necessary in order to explain what happens with the show throughout the season. They will need to find an agent to get in with a network. Then they present the materials to the network such as the bible (which is basically a breakdown of all plot-points, back story, etc), the teaser to the pilot, and if they’re interested, perhaps the entire pilot.

“We’re basically trying to sell them this idea,” said McGhee. “We have to convince them why we feel it’s a good fit for their network and basically convince them that the show will do well, which is a really tough thing to do.”



If Monroeville continues, McGhee hopes to start filming again in late winter, early spring this coming season. BBP wants nothing more than to film in Alton and use all the same actors as they did in the pilot.

“The hope is that we would continue to film in Alton if a network picks it up and the fear that we wouldn’t be able to wouldn’t be on the network,” said McGhee. “I’m sure they’d love the idea of having a film crew in a small, Midwestern town as opposed to Los Angeles.”

Things are easier to maintain and control that way, but with a big production company, comes a big production.

“What may keep us from continued filming in Alton if we get picked up by a network, would be the town itself,” said McGhee. “It’s one thing to go there for a pilot episode, but it’s quite another for an entire season. Now, instead of needing a location for one morning or night, we’ll need it for five days.”

McGhee says it all depends on the business owners, the community and how they would respond to it, as well as the Mayor’s office.

“The last thing we want to do is inconvenience the people who helped us so much in the pilot,” said McGhee. “It would be hard to imagine Monroeville being filmed somewhere else though.”

As far as the actors, they are locked in and will continue with the project, according to McGhee.

“The actors are staying, I don’t care what I have to do to make that happen,” said McGhee. “Black Bat put so much time and effort into casting the people who we felt would become the characters, and our actors did more than that. Not only were they Adam, Malcolm, Holly, Silas...but they managed to take the characters and make them their own, which I figured would be difficult for me because I’ve known the characters for so long, but actually it was quite amazing. Now I can’t write a script without seeing my actors’ faces as the characters.”



Black Bat's goal for the future of Monroeville is to get it out there for people to see. They hope to get the lifeline of the show to least until season three because there are a lot of exciting things ahead after season one.



“I could only hope that this film get picked up and go somewhere,” said Demond. “I can see the potential for a series to be made and I hope the best for all.”

To do that, Black Bat asks everyone to share this article, like [The Town of Monroeville on Facebook](#).

“I’ve had this story in my head for so long, and I just want to share it with everyone,” said McGhee. “I think people could really get on board and appreciate what it is we’re trying to do for the vampire genre as well as what we have to say about the human condition.

Black Bat’s short-term goal is to simply get season one funded.

“I feel that once season one is funded, it’s going to be a cake-walk continuing to season two and season three,” said McGhee. “I think people could really get on board and appreciate what it is we’re trying to do for the vampire genre as well as what we have to say about the human condition.”

See [BlackBatProductions.com](#) for information more on productions.



For photos and videos during the filming of the pilot and to follow the production process, visit [The Town of Monroeville on Facebook](#)!

The actor's IMDBs are available online by searching the IMDB database for [The Town of Monroeville](#) or clicking on the names below:

[William Warren Mann](#)

[Vince Hill-Bedford](#)

[Martha Hamilton](#)

[Jeff Ratkovich](#)

[Isaac Bills](#)

[L. Frost](#)