



Based on actual events.

## among brothers



Elevate Magazine got a chance to meet with one of Charlotte's up-and-coming feature-film directors, John Schwert

**Congratulations on your recent successes with Among Brothers.**

Thank you.

**Tell me a little bit about the film and the story.**

Among Brothers is a 90-minute dramatic thriller based on actual events surrounding the mysterious death of a girl that was attending Frances Marion College in South Carolina. In 1994, she was found dead in her burned-down apartment and the police informed her family that the fire and her death appeared to be an accident...then a couple days later, the autopsy revealed that there was no presence of smoke in her lungs; she was dead before the fire started.



**Somehow she died before the fire started?**

Yes, and from that point in 1994, her brother Tom spent 10 years putting together the pieces and through various conversations that he had with her friends, he began to write a story about his sister's untimely death.

**And so how did you and Tom meet?**

I met Tom through some mutual friends and we swapped stories of some short films that we had both shot, and then this story about his sister came up and after I read it, I was blown away at how someone

could find the strength to write such a compelling story about his sister, and not write it through the eyes of the victim, but essentially in the mind or 'through the eyes' of the alleged killer(s).

**And that is what got you to make your first feature?**

Yeah, I was working in bank marketing and felt almost obligated to get this story told...and for me the transition from 'telling stories' in an advertisement or in signage or in another communications medium is the same as telling it in a 90-minute feature film. The structure is completely different, but you are still telling a story, and still creating an engaging experience for someone.

**Interesting perspective, not too many filmmakers come into the business that way. So, what happened next?**





I spent a couple months working on creating an adaptation, which is essentially a cinematic, fictitious version of an original story, and during that time I was associate producing a Will Clegg film here in town, *The Rest Of Your Life*, and met Lauren Schneider who was the lead in Will's film. She is so talented and I immediately knew that she was perfect for the role of Jennifer, the victim in the film.

**She was the first person cast in the film?**

Yes, and then we had a series of auditions in Charlotte which brought in a couple hundred people, and then quite a few more who mailed in audition tapes. I ended up casting most of the supporting

actors (Daniel Watts and Lindsay Ayliffe), day players, and background extras from the NC and SC areas and then the two male leads (Matt Mercer and Corey Cicci) out of New York, and coincidentally they both attended UNC with Lauren, so it was nice to reunite them.

**Where and when did you shoot it and how did you find the rest of your crew?**

We shot the entire film here in Charlotte from September 12 to October 8 of 2004, and I still have to say thank you to this day to everyone that allowed us to shoot in and outside of their homes and businesses. The remaining 13-person crew was comprised of filmmakers from all over the Carolinas, including my mom from New York who came down to work on the film. She was great.

**That is fantastic. You've played at three film festivals to date, plus you've had four screenings in Charlotte. How are audiences receiving the film?**

We've really created a unique word of mouth following of people that support the film. When we premiered at The Palm Beach



International Film Festival, our first screening had about 60 people or so and just by word of mouth of how good the film was, we had over 100 at our next screening in Palm Beach, and then close to 150 at our screening the following week at the Houston Worldfest, where

we also received a Silver Remi Award for Theatrical Features, which was very flattering.

**Congrats on that.**

Yeah, thanks. We also played in LA, and although we competed against the Cannes Festival in France the same week, we still managed to have a good turn out and received a handful of requests for copies of the film from major and independent distributors. Plus our Film Threat 3 \_ star review has helped get the word out also...check out [www.filmthreat.com](http://www.filmthreat.com).





**So if someone is interested they can...**

They can contact me and visit [www.4wproductions.com](http://www.4wproductions.com) for information on how to get a hold of me.

**Well John, thanks again for taking the time to speak with us. We really appreciate it.**

Thank you for the time in supporting the film and for putting out such a great publication, and thanks to everyone that has touched the film in some way, whether they were an extra, one of our location contributors, or came to see the film, a genuine thanks to each of you.

**What's next for you?**

I have two scripts right now which I'd like to shoot later this year in Charlotte and we're looking for financing and trying to see how far *Among Brothers* takes us in getting it. We're really talking to a lot of people, including some A-list recognizable talent, which always helps getting the film sold.

