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Ed Harris, Sonequa Martin-Green & Natalie Morales Board Dark Veteran Dramedy 'My Dead Friend Zoe'

By **Matt Grobar**

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(L-R) Ed Harris, Sonequa Martin-Green and Natalie Morales

Getty/CBS/Catie Laffoon

EXCLUSIVE: Ed Harris (*Westworld*), Sonequa Martin-Green (*Star Trek: Discovery*) and Natalie Morales (*No Hard Feelings*) have closed deals to lead *My Dead Friend Zoe*, a dark dramedy about two generations of veterans, family and friendship, which Kyle Hausmann-Stokes will direct in his feature debut.

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The film written by Hausmann-Stokes and A.J. Bermudez tells the story of a female veteran (Martin-Green) engaged in a mysterious but comfortable friendship with her wise-cracking (and dead) best friend from the Army (Morales). When the vet is summoned to the remote lake house of her estranged Vietnam vet grandfather (Harris), she is tasked with providing the one thing he refuses...help.

Pic is based on *Merit x Zoe*, a short that Hausmann-Stokes co-wrote and directed last year, and both films draw inspiration from his real-life experiences during and after the military. A graduate of USC's School of Cinematic Arts, Hausmann-Stokes served five years in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper and convoy commander and was awarded the Bronze Star while in Iraq. He co-founded the nonprofit Veterans in Media & Entertainment, and has focused his directing career thus far on the social and human sides of the military and veteran experience.

Producers of *My Dead Friend Zoe* include Paul Scanlan and Terri Lubaroff of Legion M, alongside Richard Silverman. Also producing are Ray Maiello and Mike Field of Radiant Media Studios. Exec producers include Jeff Annison and David Baxter from Legion M. Co-producers include Liz Manashil, Maury Sterling and Chris Marvin, with casting by Jamie Castro.

"My fellow veterans and I often get reduced to archetypes and melodramatic tropes. We're much more dynamic, funny, complex than that," said Hausmann-Stokes in a statement to Deadline. "This will be a story about veterans we haven't seen before; one that anyone, military/veteran or not, can relate to and enjoy."

Stated Legion M's Co-Founder and CEO Scanlan, "We're thrilled to have high caliber talents like Ed, Natalie and Sonequa join us in bringing Kyle's unique and emotional story to life. Beyond the entertainment and commercial potential, we love that the film highlights veterans and female soldiers in a fresh way and delivers a strong social message about mental health and suicide."

"We are honored to support Kyle's vision and bring attention to the mental health challenges facing our nation's veterans," added Radiant Media Studios' Maiello and Field. "This is an inclusive story with an outstanding cast and we're gratified that our renewable energy investments can help bring these important stories to light."

A two-time Golden Globe winner and four-time Oscar nominee, Harris most recently starred as the Man in Black on HBO's *Westworld*, also appearing in Paramount's Best Picture Oscar contender *Top Gun: Maverick*, which came in as the second highest-grossing film of 2022 at a worldwide take exceeding \$1.49B. The celebrated actor has also been seen, in the last decade, in films like *The Lost Daughter*, *Kodachrome*, *Mother!*, *Snowpiercer* and *Pain & Gain*, among others. Among his

projects moving toward release are the drama *Long Day's Journey Into Night* with Jessica Lange and Ben Foster, A24's *Love Lies Bleeding* with Kristen Stewart, and the indie *Downtown Owl* from actor-filmmakers Hamish Linklater and Lily Rabe.

Martin-Green produces and stars as Cmdr. Michael Burnham in Paramount+'s *Star Trek: Discovery*, which returns for its fifth season next year. She's otherwise best known for her role as Sasha on AMC's *The Walking Dead*, though she's also been seen on series like *Once Upon a Time* and *The Good Wife*. The actress also appeared alongside LeBron James and others in Warner Bros' *Space Jam: A New Legacy*.

A Gotham Award nominee who will next be seen in the third season of Apple TV+'s *The Morning Show* and Sony's R-rated comedy *No Hard Feelings*, Morales has previously appeared in such studio features as *Stuber*, *The Little Things* and *Battle of the Sexes*, as well as well-regarded Indies like *Language Lessons* and *I'm Totally Fine*. She led the NBC sitcom *Abby's* and has also been seen on series like *Dead to Me*, *Santa Clarita Diet*, *The Grinder*, *Parks and Recreation* and *White Collar*. Other upcoming projects for the actress include two films out of SXSW 2023: the sci-fi romance *If You Were the Last* with Anthony Mackie, and actor Jake Johnson's feature directorial debut, *Self Reliance*.

Notable past projects from the fan-owned entertainment company Legion M including *Colossal* starring Anne Hathaway and Jason Sudeikis, *Mandy* starring Nicolas Cage, and *Archenemy* starring Joe Manganiello. Others coming up for release include the thriller *The Man in the White Van* starring Sean Astin, Ali Larter, Brec Bassinger and Madison Wolfe, and the dark comedy *Nandor Fodor and the Talking Mongoose* starring Simon Pegg, Minnie Driver and Christopher Lloyd.

Harris is repped by CAA and Ziffren Brittenham; Martin-Green by Gersh, Principal Entertainment LA and Johnson Shapiro Slewett & Kole; Morales by CAA, Bleecker Street Entertainment and Goodman, Genow, Schenkman; and Bermudez by Writ Large.

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