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Morgan Freeman, Gloria Reuben & Utkarsh Ambudkar Board Veteran Dramedy 'My Dead Friend Zoe'

By **Matt Grobar**

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(L-R) Morgan Freeman, Gloria Reuben and Utkarsh Ambudkar

Nigel Parry/Rebecca Michelson/Chris Ryan Ross

EXCLUSIVE: Writer-director Kyle Hausmann-Stokes has continued rounding out an impressive cast for his debut feature, the dark veteran dramedy *My Dead Friend Zoe*, bringing Morgan Freeman (*The Shawshank Redemption*), Gloria Reuben (*Mr. Robot*) and Utkarsh Ambudkar (*Brittany Runs a Marathon*) aboard for roles.

The film delving into the lives of military veterans, to highlight both their triumphs and challenges

upon returning home, will have the trio starring alongside the previously announced Ed Harris, Sonequa Martin-Green and Natalie Morales.

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Written by Hausmann-Stokes and A.J. Bermudez, *My Dead Friend Zoe* is based on *Merit x Zoe*, a short that Hausmann-Stokes co-wrote and directed last year, which draws on his personal experience during and after the military, as a Bronze Star combat veteran. The film 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.

Producers on the project include Paul Scanlan and Terri Lubaroff of Legion M, as well as Richard Silverman of ReCre8 Entertainment, Ray Maiello and Mike Field of Radiant Media Studios, and Robert Paschall Jr. Legion M's Jeff Annison, David Baxter and Brandi Plants are exec producing alongside Jordan Dykstra, Chris Boshuizen, and Nancy and Joseph Masterson. Co-producers on the pic, cast by Jamie Castro, include Liz Manashil, Maury Sterling, Martin Masterson, Steve Rodosky, Rao Meka and Chris Marvin.

"It's rare that one of us (veterans) gets the opportunity to tell our own story. Morgan is a fellow vet (Air Force) and I'm honored, humbled for him to join our amazing cast and help us tell this important story," said Hausmann-Stokes. "Adding Gloria Reuben's depth and versatility and Utkarsh Ambudkar's vibrant energy and comedic chops perfectly aligns with my goal to make a more universal and accessible kind of film about the military and veterans; one with as much levity and humor as heart and gravity."

"The caliber of this all-star cast is a reflection of the quality of the script and the story. We're thrilled with this gifted team coming together and we're moved by their profound engagement to the story and purpose," added Legion M Co-Founder and CEO, Scanlan. "This project, imbued with universal themes, strikes a chord in everyone. We're also energized by the enthusiastic support from our Legion M community, and reinforced by the embrace of the underserved veteran community – both audiences longing for authentic, relatable narratives told in a compelling way."

An Academy Award winner known for turns in classic films like *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Million Dollar Baby*, Freeman most recently starred opposite Florence Pugh in Zach Braff's drama *A Good Person*, released by MGM in March. Among the actor's other upcoming projects is the spy thriller series *Special Ops: Lioness* from Taylor Sheridan, which has him starring opposite Zoe

Saldana and is scheduled to premiere on Paramount+ July 23.

Reuben is known for roles on such series as *City on a Hill*, *Mr. Robot*, *Cloak & Dagger*, *Saints & Sinners* and *ER*, among others. The Golden Globe and two-time Emmy nominee has most recently been seen on the film side in titles like *Firestarter*, *The Jesus Rolls* and *Who We Are Now*.

Currently starring opposite Rose McIver on the hit CBS comedy series *Ghosts*, Ambudkar has previously been seen in notable roles on shows like *Never Have I Ever* and *The Mindy Project*. He'll appear in Netflix's live-action adaptation of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and has been seen on the film side in the Jennifer Lopez starrer *Marry Me*, Lin-Manuel Miranda's *tick, tick... BOOM!*, Ryan Reynolds starrer *Free Guy*, Sundance darling *Brittany Runs a Marathon* and more.

Freeman is repped by CAA and Sloane, Offer, Weber & Dern; Reuben by TalentWorks, Echo Lake Entertainment and Goodman, Genow, Schenkman; and Ambudkar by Gersh, 3 Arts Entertainment and Jackoway Austen Tyerman.

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