

Your new Predator also wants to be your new Jason Voorhees

Professional basketball-player-turned-actor Dane DiLiegro has his sights set on the *Friday the 13th* franchise.

By **Clark Collis**

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In 2019, Dane DiLiegro was a professional basketball player, playing center for the Italian team Forlì. Now? DiLiegro is portraying the new Predator in director Dan Trachtenberg's Hulu offshoot, *Prey* (launching August 5). It's a career move that seems as unbelievable to him as it may to you.

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Predator, the other was Jason Voorhees for *Friday the 13th*. To this day, I can't believe that I got the opportunity to portray *the* Predator. I still can't believe it."

Dan DiLiegro as the Predator in *Prey* | CREDIT: DAVID BUKACH/20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

Set in the early 18th century, *Prey* stars Amber Midthunder as Naru, a young member of the Comanche Nation whose desire to prove herself as a hunter results in her crossing paths with a wholly unexpected foe.

"It's a period-piece sci-fi adventure story about a Comanche female who likes to hunt, wants to be a warrior, and other people don't see it, and she wants to prove herself," says DiLiegro of the film, the fifth in the *Predator* franchise. "There just happens to be a Predator involved. Honestly, you could have shot this movie with a different monster and it still probably would have worked. I like how it's a different, fresh story and there just happens to be a Predator."

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY: Did you always want to get into acting?

DANE DILIEGRO: Yeah. I mean, when I was young, Pierce Brosnan was so amazing to me. I don't know why I idolized this guy. I wanted to be a spy, and then I realized, oh, Pierce Brosnan, he can be all different things as an actor. I thought it was incredible. But then, I fell into basketball.

This whole acting thing came about when somebody told me, you know, there's a small handful of people who play monsters in movies. And obviously [that was] not my dream growing up but I thought, this is a cool thing, it's really interesting, could be a cool backdoor into acting as well. It took off very quickly. Two weeks into learning about creature acting, I booked a Netflix show, *Sweet Home*, and I was on my way to Los Angeles to find an apartment. Now I'm talking to *Entertainment Weekly* about my role [in *Prey*] and it's incredible to me.

You played a zombie on *The Walking Dead*?

Yes. I think I one of the tallest walkers in *Walking Dead* history. That was very early in my career. I essentially walked in a circle for six hours. I was a character in *American Horror Stories* as well. They named the episode ("Ba'al") after my character. I was a fertility demon.

Prey star Dane DiLiegro | CREDIT: GIZELLE HERNANDEZ FOR EW

How did you get the part of the Predator?

So, this is crazy. I initially was just the reference guy. Alec Gillis, who build the suit for StudioADI [an effects company whose credits include *Starship Troopers* and 2018's *The Predator*] reached out to me through Instagram and asked if I could come in for a design pitch for a project he's working on. I didn't even know what the project was. I went in and I saw the Predator suit from the last movie on the table. Oh, this is *Predator*! They had 3D printed an idea of what they wanted for the new head, and I put on the suit and I put on the head, and Dan, our DP Jeff Cutter, and Marty Ewing our producer, came to the studio, and I did my take on this Predator, and how I thought he should move. I realized that they hadn't cast anyone for this Predator and I told them, I will do anything to be your Predator. Long story short, I ended up doing all the acting, all the stunts, and all the mo-cap [motion capture] for this character.

What was the shoot like?

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June of last year, it was really hot through July and August, and then into September it started getting cold at nighttime, so we got all the seasons. Yeah, Calgary gets really hot in the summer. You wouldn't think that, but we had some 96-plus degree days. At the end of the day, I would flex my arm and sweat would come out, because foam latex is essentially a sponge. I would start the day, the suit would be about 70 pounds, by the end of the day, it's got to be 85 pounds, because it would just absorb all the sweat. I had to lose 25 pounds for this role, to make this Predator seem more lean and dynamic, and I still weighed over 300 pounds when I had everything on. So it was a lot to juggle.

Amber Midthunder in Prey | CREDIT: DAVID BUKACH/20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

Your Predator has both a different facial look and a different mask. Could you talk about that?

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character in 1987's Schwarzenegger-starring *Predator*]. Dan wanted this [version] to be feral, more animalistic, primal, dynamic, lean, more violent, and that gave me the green light to experiment, try different things. He wanted to get away from that 1987 WWF wrestler-standoff-style. This guy's quick, he's fast, he's ferocious, and he's instinctual. You don't see that in a lot of other Predators.

So, yeah, it's a fresh take. This is the first time an actor's eyes are not the Predator eyes. My face was in the neck of this character. I shot this entire movie essentially blind. There were two holes in the neck. For the Predator to look forward I had to look straight at the ground and shrug my shoulders. So all my fight scenes, all my acting scenes, everything, [I was] essentially blind. I had a first AD in my ear talking me through everything and we had to lay sticks on the ground to guide me through all of my scenes.

How did you manage to take part in the film's fight scenes without being able to see?

Lots of rehearsal. Lots of choreography, running through it again and again. And I had to tell Dakota [Beavers, who plays Naru's brother], I had to tell Amber, "Hey, if you don't duck, I'm going to hit you. I can't see you." It was very real. The danger was there. And I think it added to the realism of the fights. Me and Dakota – our fight is so dynamic. That was real. I was springing on him with full speed, essentially.

So what is it like to wake up in the morning and think, I'm about to go to the office, as it were, and be the Predator?

That was a very real thing. We were there for 90 days. You wake up in the morning, and you open your eyes, and you're staring at the ceiling, and your mind is hardwired to naturally go where it's been before this production. And you get like three to four seconds and then [*snaps fingers*] *Oh, my God, I'm the Predator*. That's right, I forgot. Seriously, pardon my language, but you wake up and it's like, I'm the f---ing Predator!

Have you shot anything since *Prey*?

Uh, that I'm allowed to talk about?

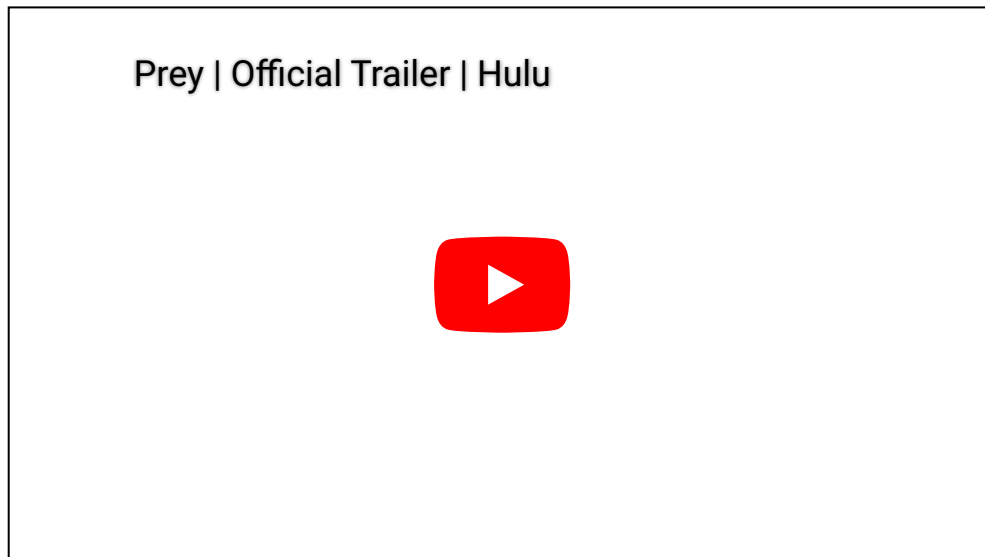
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I worked on a Marvel project that just wrapped a few months ago, and I am currently shooting a Lucasfilm production. They're not always huge title roles like the Predator, but to be involved in things under those umbrellas is an honor, and gives me a tremendous sense of pride.

Now you've played the Predator, are you going to go after your second dream role, Jason Voorhees?

I definitely have my eyes on it. My parents went to this Halloween festival in Massachusetts and I was too scared to go, so they came back with a knife autographed by the actor who played Jason Voorhees. I still have it to this day. I was Jason for four Halloweens.

Prey premieres on Hulu August 5. Watch the film's trailer below.



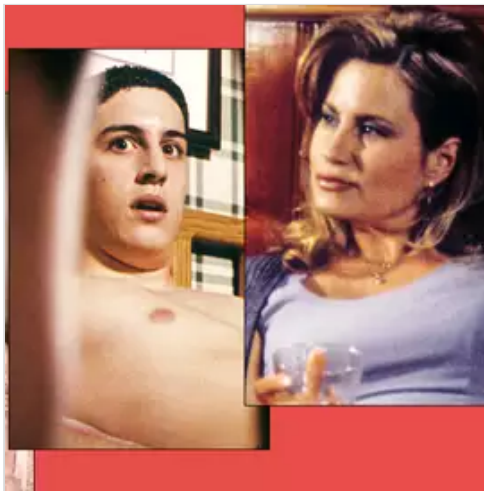
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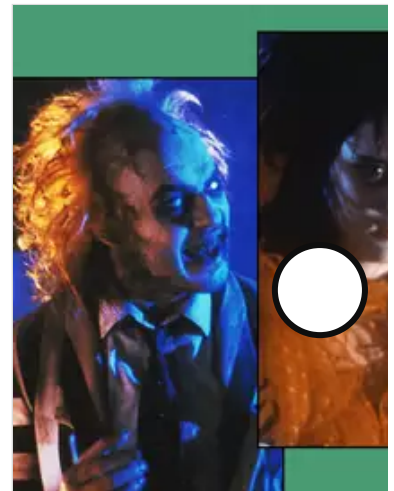
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